DOCTOR JOHNS:

BEING

A NARRATIVE

OF CERTAIN EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF AN ORTHODOX MINISTER OF CONNECTICUT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"MY FARM OF EDGEWOOD."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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DOCTOR JOHNS.

XXXVI.

AUTUMN and winter passed by, and the summer of 1838 opened upon the old quiet life of Ashfield. The stiff Miss Johns, busy with her household duties, or with her stately visitings. The Doctor's hat and cane in their usual place upon the little table within the door, and of a Sunday his voice is lifted up under the old meeting-house roof in earnest expostulation. The birds pipe their old songs, and the orchard has shown once more its wondrous glory of bloom. But all these things have lost their novelty for Adèle. Would it be strange, if the tranquil life of the little town had lost something of its early charm? That swift French blood of hers has been stirred by contact with the outside world. She has, perhaps, not been wholly insensible to those admiring glances which so quickened the pride of the father. Do not such things leave a hunger in the heart of a girl of seventeen which the sleepy streets of a country town can but poorly gratify?

The young girl is, moreover, greatly disturbed at the thought of the new separation from her father for some indefinite period. Her affections have knitted themselves around him, during that delightful journey of the summer, in a way that has made her feel with new weight the parting. It is all the worse that she does not clearly perceive the necessity for it. Is she not of an age now to contribute to the cheer of whatever home he may have beyond the sea? Why, pray, has he given her such uninviting pictures of his companions there? Or what should she care for his companions, if only she could enjoy his tender watchfulness? Or is it that her religious education is not yet thoroughly complete, and that she still holds out against a full and public avowal of all the doctrines which the Doctor urges upon her acceptance? And the thought of this makes his kindly severities appear more irksome than ever.

Another cause of grief to Adèle is the extreme disfavor in which she finds that Madame Arles is now regarded by the towns-people. Her sympathies had run towards the unfortunate woman in some inexplicable way, and held there even now, so strongly that contemptuous mention of her stung like a reproach to herself. At least she was a countrywoman, and alone among strangers; and in this Adèle found abundant reason for a generous sympathy. As for her religion,

was it not the religion of her mother and of her good godmother? And with this thought flaming in her, is it wonderful if Adèle toys more fondly than ever, in the solitude of her chamber, with the little rosary she has guarded so long? Not, indeed, that she has much faith in its efficacy; but it is a silent protest against the harsh speeches of Miss Eliza, who had been specially jealous of the influence of the French teacher.

"I never liked her countenance, Adèle," said the spinster, in her solemn manner; "and I am rejoiced that you will not be under her influence the present summer."

"And I 'm sorry," said Adèle, petulantly.

"It is gratifying to me," continued Miss Eliza, without notice of Adèle's interruption, "that Mr. Maverick has confirmed my own impressions, and urged the Doctor against permitting so unwise association."

"When? how?" said Adèle, sharply. "Papa has never seen her."

"But he has seen other French women, Adèle, and he fears their influence."

Adèle looked keenly at the spinster for a moment, as if to fathom the depth of this reply, then burst into tears.

"Oh, why, why did n't he take me with him?" But this she says under breath, and to herself, as she rushes into the Doctor's study to question him.

"Is it true, New Papa, that papa thought badly of Madame Arles?"

"Not personally, my child, since he had never seen her. But, Adaly, your father, though I fear he is far away from the true path, wishes you to find it, my child. He has faith in the religion we teach so imperfectly; he wishes you to be exposed to no influences that will forbid your full acceptance of it."

"But Madame Arles never talked of religion to me;" and Adèle taps impatiently upon the floor.

"That may be true, Adaly, — it may be true; but we cannot be thrown into habits of intimacy with those reared in iniquity without fear of contracting stain. I could wish, my child, that you would so far subdue your rebellious heart, and put on the complete armor of righteousness, as to be able to resist all attacks."

"And it was for this papa left me here?" And Adèle says it with a smile of mockery that alarms the good Doctor.

"I trust Adaly, that he had that hope."

The good man does not know what swift antagonism to his pleadings he has suddenly kindled in her. The little foot taps more and more impatiently as he goes on to set forth (as he had so often done) the heinousness of her offences and the weight of her just condemnation. Yet the antagonism did not incline her to open doubt; but after she had said her evening prayer that

night, (taught her by the parson,) she drew out her little rosary and kissed reverently the crucifix. It is so much easier at this juncture for her tried and distracted spirit to bolster its faith upon such material symbol than to find repose in any merely intellectual conviction of truth!

Adèle's intimacy with Rose and with her family retained all its old tenderness, but that good fellow Phil was gone. A blithe and merry companion he had been! Adèle missed his kindly attentions more than she would have believed. The Bowriggs have come to Ashfield, but their clamorous friendship is more than ever distasteful to Adèle. Over and over she makes a feint of illness to escape the noisy hilarity. Nor, indeed, is it wholly a feint. Whether it were that her state of moral perturbation and unrest reacted upon the physical system, or that there were other disturbing causes, certain it was that the roses were fading from her cheeks, and that her step was losing day by day something of its old buoyancy. It is even thought best to summon the village doctor to the family council. He is a gossiping, kindly old gentleman, who spends an easy life, free from much mental strain, in trying to make his daily experiences tally with the little fund of medical science which he accumulated thirty years before.

The serene old gentleman feels the pulse, with

his head reflectively on one side, — tells his little jokelet about Sir Astley Cooper, or some other worthy of the profession, — shakes his fat sides with a cheery laugh, — "And now, my dear," he says, "let us look at the tongue. Ah, I see, I see, — the stomach lacks tone."

"And there 's dreadful lassitude, sometimes, Doctor," speaks up Miss Eliza.

"Ah, I see, — a little exhaustion after a long walk, — is n't it so, Miss Maverick? I see, I see; we must brace up the system, Miss Johns, — brace up the system."

And the kindly old gentleman prescribes his little tonics, of which Adèle takes some, and throws more out of the window.

Adèle does not mend, and the rumor is presently current upon the street that "Miss Adeel is in a decline." The spinster shows a solicitude in the matter which almost touches the heart of the French girl. For Adèle had long before decided that there could be no permanent sympathy between them, and had indulged latterly in no little bitterness of speech toward her. But the acute spinster had forgiven all. Never once had she lost sight of her plan for the ultimate disposal of Adèle and of her father's fortune. Of course the life of Adèle was very dear to her, and the absence of Phil she looked upon as providential.

Weeks pass by, but still the tonics of the kindly old physician prove of little efficacy. One day the Bowriggs came blustering in, as is their wont.

"Such assurance! Did you ever hear the like? Madame Arles writes us that she is coming to see Ashfield again, and of course coming to us. The air of the town agrees with her, and she hopes to find lodgings."

The eyes of Adèle sparkle with satisfaction, — not so much, perhaps, by reason of her old sympathy with the poor woman, which is now almost forgotten, as because it will give some change at least to the dreary monotony of the town life.

"Lodgings, indeed!" says the younger Miss Bowrigg. "I wonder where she will find them!"

It is a matter of great doubt, to be sure, — since the sharp speech of the spinster has so spread the story of her demerits, that not a parishioner of the Doctor but would have feared to give the poor woman a home.

Adèle still has strength enough for an occasional stroll with Rose, and, in the course of one of them, comes upon Madame Arles, whom she meets with a good deal of her old effusion. And Madame, touched by her apparent weakness, more than reciprocates it.

"But you suffer, you are unhappy, my child,—pining at last for the sun of Provence. Is n't it so, *mon ange?* No, no, you were never meant to grow up among these cold people. You must see the vineyards, and the olives, and the sea, Adèle; you must! you must!"

All this, uttered in a torrent, which, with its *tutoiements*, Rose can poorly comprehend.

Yet it goes straight to the heart of Adèle, and her tongue is loosened to a little petulant, fiery, *roulade* against the severities of the life around her, which it would have greatly pained poor Rose to listen to in any speech of her own.

But such interviews, once or twice repeated, come to the knowledge of the watchful spinster, who clearly perceives that Adèle is chafing more and more under the wonted family regimen. With an affectation of tender solicitude, she volunteers herself to attend Adèle upon her short morning strolls, and she learns presently, with great triumph, that Madame Arles has established herself at last under the same roof which gives refuge to the outcast Boody woman. Nothing more was needed to seal the opinion of the spinster, and to confirm the current village belief in the heathenish character of the French lady. Dame Tourtelot was shrewdly of the opinion that the woman represented some Popish plot for the abduc-

tion of Adèle, and for her incarceration in a nunnery, — a theory which Miss Almira, with her natural tendency to romance, industriously propagated.

Meantime the potions of the village doctor have little effect, and before July is ended a serious illness has declared itself, and Adèle is confined to her chamber. Madame Arles is among the earliest who come with eager inquiries, and begs to see the sufferer. But she is confronted by the indefatigable spinster, who, cloaking her denial under ceremonious form, declares that her state of nervous prostration will not admit of it. Madame withdraws, sadly; but the visit and the claim are repeated from time to time, until the stately civility of Miss Johns arouses her suspicions.

"You deny me, Madame. You do wrong. I love Adèle; she loves me. I know that I could comfort her. You do not understand her nature. She was born where the sky is soft and warm. You are all cold and harsh, — cold and harsh in your religion. She has told me as much. I know how she suffers. I wish I could carry her back to France with me. I pray you, let me see her, good Madame!"

"It is quite impossible, I assure you," said the spinster, in her most aggravating manner. "It would be quite against the wishes of my brother, the Doctor, as well as of Mr. Maverick."

"Monsieur Maverick! *Mon Dieu*, Madame! He is no father to her; he leaves her to die with strangers; he has no heart; I have better right: I love her. I must see her!"

And with a passionate step, — those eyes of hers glaring in that strange double way upon the amazed Miss Eliza, — she strides toward the door, as if she would overcome all opposition. But before she has gone out, that cruel pain has seized her, and she sinks upon a chair, quite prostrated, and with hands clasped wildly over that burden of a heart.

"Too hard! too hard!" she murmurs, scarce above her breath.

The spinster is attentive, but is untouched. Her self-poise never deserts her. And not then, or at any later period, did poor Madame Arles succeed in overcoming the iron resolve of Miss Johns.

The good Doctor is greatly troubled by the report of Miss Eliza. Can it be possible that Adèle has given a confidence to this strange woman that she has not given to them? Cold and harsh! Can Adèle, indeed, have said this? Has he not labored with a full heart? Has he not agonized in prayer to draw in this wandering lamb to the fold? He has seen, indeed, that the poor child has chafed much latterly, that the old serenity and gayety are gone. But is it not a chafing under the fetters of

sin? Is it not that she begins to see more clearly the fiery judgments of God which will certainly overwhelm the wrong-doers, whatever may be the unsubstantial and evanescent graces of their mortal life?

Yet, with all the rigidity of his doctrine, which he cannot in conscience mollify, even for the tender ears of Adèle, it disturbs him strangely to hear that she has qualified his regimen as harsh or severe. Has he not taught, in season and out of season, the fullness of God's promises? Has he not labored and prayed? Is it not the ungodly heart in her that finds his teaching a burden? Is not his conscience safe? Yet, for all this, it touches him to the quick to think that her childlike, trustful confidence is at last alienated from him, — that her affection for him is so distempered by dread and weariness. For, unconsciously, he has grown to love her as he loves no one save his boy Reuben; unconsciously his heart has mellowed under her influence. Through her winning, playful talk, he has taken up that old trail of worldly affections which he had thought buried forever in Rachel's grave. That tender touch of her little fingers upon his cheek has seemed to say, "Life has its joys, old man!" The patter of her feet along the house has kindled the memories of other gentle steps that

tread now silently in the courts of air. Those songs of hers, — how he has loved them! Never confessing even to Miss Eliza, still less to himself, how much his heart is bound up in this little winsome stranger, who has shone upon his solitary parsonage like a sunbeam.

And the good man, with such thoughts thronging on him, falls upon his knees, beseeching God to "be over the sick child, to comfort her, to heal her, to pour down His divine grace upon her, to open her blind eyes to the richness of His truth, to keep her from all the machinations and devices of Satan, to arm her with true holiness, to make her a golden light in the household, to give her a heart of love toward all, and most of all toward Him who so loved her that He gave His only begotten Son."

And the Doctor, rising from his attitude of prayer, and going toward the little window of his study to arrange it for the night, sees a slight figure in black pacing up and down upon the opposite side of the way, and looking up from time to time to the light that is burning in the window of Adèle. He knows on the instant who it must be, and fears more than ever the possible influence which this strange woman, who is so persistent in her attention, may have upon the heart of the girl. The Doctor had heretofore been disposed to turn a deaf ear to the current reproaches of Madame

Arles for her association with the poor outcast daughter of the village; but her appearance at this unseemly hour of the night, coupled with his traditional belief in the iniquities of the Romish Church, excited terrible suspicions in his mind. Like most holy men, ignorant of the crafts and devices of the world, he no sooner blundered into a suspicion of some deep Devil's cunning than every footfall and every floating zephyr seemed to confirm it. He bethought himself of Maverick's earnest caution; and before he went to bed that night, he prayed that no designing Jezebel might corrupt the poor child committed to his care.

The next night the Doctor looked again from his window, after blowing out his lamp, and there once more was the figure in black, pacing up and down. What could it mean? Was it possible that some Satanic influence could pass over from this emissary of the Evil One, (as he firmly believed her to be,) for the corruption of the sick child who lay in the delirium of a fever above?

The extreme illness of Adèle was subject of common talk in the village, and the sympathy was very great. On the following night Adèle was far worse, and the Doctor, at about his usual bed-time, went out to summon the physician. At a glance he saw in the shadow of the opposite houses the same figure pacing up and down. He hurried his steps, fearing she might seek

occasion to dart in upon the sick-chamber before his return. But he had scarcely gone twenty paces from his door, when he heard a swift step behind, and in another instant there was a grip, as of a tigress, upon his arm.

"Adèle, — how is she? Tell me!"

"Ill, — very ill," said the Doctor, shaking himself from her grasp, and continued in his solemn manner, "it is an hour to be at home, woman!"

But she, paying no heed to his admonition, says, —

"I must see her, — I *must!*" — and dashes back toward the parsonage.

The Doctor, terrified, follows after. But he can keep no manner of pace with that swift, dark figure that glides before him. He comes to the porch panting. The door is closed. Has the infuriated woman gone in? No, for presently her grasp is again upon his arm; for a moment she had sunk, exhausted by fatigue, or overcome by emotion, upon the porch. Her tone is more subdued.

"I entreat you, good Doctor, let me see Adèle! — for Christ's sake, if you be His minister, let me see her!"

"Impossible, woman, impossible!" says the Doctor, more than ever satisfied of her Satanic character by what he counts her blasphemous speech. "Adaly is delirious, — fearfully excited: it would destroy her. The only hope is in perfect quietude."

The woman releases her grasp.

"Please, Doctor, let me come to-morrow. I must see her! I will see her!"

"You shall not," said the Doctor, with solemnity, — "never, with my permission. Go to your home, woman, and pray God to have mercy on you."

"Monster!" exclaimed she, passionately, as she shook the Doctor's arm, still under her grasp; and murmuring other words in language the good man did not comprehend, she slipped silently down the yard, — away into the darkness.

XXXVII.

MEANTIME Reuben was gaining, month by month, in a knowledge of the world, — at least of such portion of it as came within the range of his vision in New York. He imagined it, indeed, a very large portion, and took airs upon himself in consequence. He thought with due commiseration of the humble people of Ashfield. He wonders how he could have tolerated so long their simple ways. The Eagle Tavern, with its creaking sign-board, does not loom so largely as it once did upon the horizon of his thought. That he should ever have trembled as a lad at walking up to the little corner bar, in company with Phil! And as for Nat Boody, whose stories he once listened to admiringly, what a scrubby personage he has become in his eye! Fighting-dogs, indeed! "Scamp" would be nothing to what he has seen a score of times in the city!

He has put Phil through some of the "sights:" for that great lout of a country lad (as Reuben could not help counting him, though he liked his big, honest heart for all that) had found him out, when he came to New York to take ship for the West Indies.

"I say, Phil," Reuben had said, as he marched his old schoolmate up Broadway, "it 's rather a touch beyond Ashfield, this, is n't it? How do you think Old Boody's tavern and sign-board would look along here?"

And Phil laughed, quietly.

"I should like to see old Deacon Tourtelot," continued Reuben, "with Huldy on his arm, sloping down Broadway. Would n't the old people stare?"

"I guess they would," Phil said, demurely.

"I wonder if they 'd knock off at sundown Saturday night," continued Reuben, mockingly.

And his tone somehow hurt Phil, who had the memories of the old home — a very dear one to him — fresh upon him.

"And I suppose Miss Almiry keeps at her singing?"

"Yes," said Phil, straining a point in favor of his townswoman; "and I think she sings pretty well."

"Pretty well! By Jove, Phil, you should have been at the Old Park night before last; you would have heard what *I* call singing. It would have stirred up the old folks of Ashfield."

And Phil met it all very seriously. It seemed to him, in his honesty, that Reuben was wantonly cutting asunder all the ties that once bound him to the old home. It pained him, moreover, to think — as he did, with a good deal of restiveness — that his blessed mother, and Rose perhaps, and the old Squire, his

father, were among the Ashfield people at whom Reuben sneered so glibly. And when he parted with him upon the dock, — for Reuben had gone down to see him off, — it was with a secret conviction that their old friendship had come to an end, and that thenceforth they two could have no sympathies in common.

But in this Phil was by no means wholly right. The talk of Reuben was, after all, but the ebullition of a city conceit, — a conceit which is apt to belong to all young men at some period of their novitiate in city life. He was mainly anxious to impress upon Phil the great gain which he had made in knowledge of the world in the last few years, and to astound him with the great difference between his present stand-point and the old one, when they were boys together on the benches of the Ashfield meeting-house. We never make such gains, or apparent gains, at any period of life, it is to be feared, without wishing to demonstrate their magnitude to the slow coaches we have left behind.

And on the very night after Reuben had parted from Phil, when he came late to his chamber, dazed with some new scene at the theater, and his brain flighty with a cup too much, it may well have happened, that, in his fevered restlessness, as the clock near by chimed midnight, his thoughts ran back to that other chamber where once sweet sleep always greeted him, — to the overhanging boughs that rustled in the evening air at

the window, — to the shaded street that stretched away between the silent houses, — to the song of the katydids, chattering their noisy chorus, — to the golden noons when light feet tripped along the village walks, — to the sunny smiles of Rose, — to the kindly entreaty of good Mrs. Elderkin, — and more faintly, yet more tenderly, than elsewhere, to a figure and face far remote, and so glorified by distance that they seem almost divine, a figure and a face that are somehow associated with the utterance of his first prayer, — and with the tender vision before him, he mumbles the same prayer and falls asleep with it upon his lip.

Only on his lip, however, — and the next day, when he steals a half-hour for a stroll upon Broadway with that dashing girl, Miss Sophia Bowrigg, (she is really a stylish creature,) he has very little thought of the dreamy sentiments of the night before, which seemed for the time to keep his wilder vagaries in subjection, and to kindle aspirations toward a better life. It is doubtful, even, if he did not indulge in an artful compliment or two to the dashing Miss Sophia, the point of which lay in a cleverly covered contrast of herself with the humdrum manners of the fair ones of Ashfield. Yet, to tell truth, he is not wholly untouched by certain little rallying, coquettish speeches of Miss Sophia in respect to Adèle, who, in her open, girl-like way, has very likely told the full story of Reuben's city attentions.

Reuben had, indeed, been piqued by the French girl's reception of his patronage, and he had been fairly carried off his feet in view of her easy adaptation to the ways of the city, and of her graceful carriage under all the toilet equipments which had been lavished upon her, under the advice of Mrs. Brindlock. A raw boy comes only by long aptitude into the freedom of a worldly manner; but a girl — most of all a French girl, in whom the instincts of her race are strong — leaps to such conquest in a day. Of course he had intimated to Adèle no wonder at the change; but he had thrust a stray glove of hers into his pocket, counting it only a gallant theft; and there had been days when he had drawn out that little relic of her visit from its hidden receptacle, and smoothed it upon his table, and pressed it, very likely, to his lips, in the same way in which youth of nineteen or twenty are used to treat such feminine tokens of grace.

It was a dainty glove, to be sure. It conjured up her presence in its most alluring aspect. The rustle of her silk, the glow of her cheek, the coyness of her touch, whenever she has dropped that delicate hand on his, came with the sight of it. He ventures, in a moment of gallant exuberance, to purchase a half-dozen of the same number, of very charming tints, (to his eye,) and sends them as a gift to Adèle, saying, —

"I found your stray glove we had a search for in the carriage, but did not tell of it. I hope these will fit."

"They fit nicely," said Adèle, writing back to him, — "so nicely, I may be tempted to throw another old glove of mine some time in your way."

Miss Eliza Johns was of course delighted with this attention of Reuben's, and made it the occasion of writing him a long letter, (and her letters were very rare, by reason of the elaboration she counted necessary,) in which she set forth the excellence of Adèle's character, her "propriety of speech," her "lady-like deportment," her "cheerful observance of duty," and her "eminent moral worth," in such terms as stripped all romance from Reuben's recollection of her, and made him more than half regret his gallant generosity.

The Doctor writes to him regularly once a fortnight; of which missives Reuben reads as regularly the last third, containing, as it does usually, a little home news or casual mention of Miss Rose Elderkin or of the family circle. The other two thirds, mainly expostulatory, he skips, only allowing his eye to glance over them, and catch such scattered admonitions as these: — "Be steadfast in the truth. . . . . Let your light shine before men. . . . . Be not tempted of the Devil; for if you resist him, he will flee from you. . . . . The wisdom of this world is foolishness. . . . . Trust not, my son, in any arm of flesh."

Ah, how much of such good advice had been twisted into tapers for the lighting of Reuben's cigars! Not because it was absolutely scorned; not because it was held in contempt, or its giver held in contempt; but because there was so much of it. If the old gentleman had been in any imminent bodily peril, it is certain that Reuben would have rushed far and wide to aid him. It is certain that he loved him; it is certain that he venerated him; and yet, and yet, (he said to himself,) "I do wish he would keep this solemn stuff for his sermons. Who cares to read it? Who cares to hear it, except on Sundays?"

We all grow so weary with the iteration of even the best of truths! we all love youth so much! we all love the world so much! we all trust to an arm of flesh so much!

Not for a moment did the Doctor believe that his recreant son pondered wisely and deeply these successive epistles of his. He knew him too well for that. But for him duty was always duty. "Here a little, and there a little." It would have pained the old gentleman grievously to know the full extent of the wickedness of his boy, — to have looked for a moment into the haunts to which he was beguiled by his companions of the city, — to have seen his flushed and swollen face after some of those revels to which Reuben was a party. But the good Doctor was too ignorant of the

world to conceive, even, of larger latitude than an occasional cigar or a stolen sight at the orgies of the theater. And when Mr. Brindlock wrote, as he took occasion to do about this period, regretting the extravagance of Reuben and the bad associations into which he had fallen, and urging the Doctor to impress upon him the advantages of regularity and of promptitude, and to warn him that a very advantageous business career which was opening upon him would be blighted by his present habits, the poor gentleman was fairly taken aback.

That even this worldly gentleman, Mr. Brindlock, should take exception to the courses of his son was a most startling fact. What admonition could the Doctor add to those which he had addressed to his poor son fortnightly for years past? Had he not warned him over and over that he was standing upon slippery places? Had he not unfolded the terrors of God's wrath upon sinners? Had he not set before him in "line upon line" the awful truth that his immortal career was at stake? And should he descend from this ground to plead with him upon the score of his short-lived worldly career? What were all business prospects, however they might wane, compared with that dreadful prospect which lies before him who refuseth godly counsel and hardeneth his heart? Was it not a fearful comfirmation of Satan's reign upon earth, that peril to a temporal ca-

reer should serve for warning against criminal excesses, when the soul's everlasting peril was urged vainly? The Doctor wrote to Reuben with even more than his usual unction. But he could not bring himself to warn his boy of the mere blight to his worldly career, — that was so small a matter! Yet he laid before him in graver terms than he had ever done before the weight of the judgment of an offended God, and the fearful retribution that would certainly overtake the ungodly. Reuben lighted his cigar with the letter, not unfeelingly, but indifferently, and ventured even upon a blasphemous joke with his companions.

"It ought to burn," he says. "There 's plenty of brimstone in it!"

It would have crazed the minister of Ashfield to have heard the speech. In his agony of mind he went to consult Squire Elderkin, and laid before him the dire accounts he had heard.

"Ah, young men will be young men, Doctor. There 's time for him to come out right yet. It 's the blood of the old Major; it must have vent."

As the Doctor recalled what he counted his father's godless death, he shuddered. Presently he talked of summoning his boy home immediately.

"Well, Doctor," said the Squire, meditatively, "there are two sides to that matter. There are great temptations in the city, to be sure; but if God puts a man in

the way of great temptations, I suppose He gives him strength to resist them. Is n't that good theology?"

The parson nodded assent.

"We can always resist, if we will, Squire," said he.

"Very good, Doctor. Suppose, now, you bring your boy home; he 'll fret desperately under your long lectures, and with Miss Eliza, and perhaps run off into deviltries that will make him worse than those of the city. You must humor him a little, Doctor; touch his pride; there 's a fine, frank spirit at the bottom; give him a good word now and then."

"I know no word so good as prayer," said the Doctor, gravely.

"That 's very well, Doctor, very well. Mrs. Elderkin gives him help that way; and between you and me, Doctor, if any woman's prayers can call down blessings, I think that little woman's can," — and the Squire's eyes fairly flashed with the dew that came into them.

"An estimable lady, — most estimable!" said the Doctor.

"Pray, if you will, Doctor; it 's all right; and for my part, I 'll drop him a line, telling him the town feels an ownership in him, and hopes he 'll do us all credit. I think we can bring him out all right."

"Thank you, — thank you, Squire," said the Doctor, with an unusual warmth.

And he wrought fervently in prayer that night; may be, too, the hearty invocation of that good woman, Mrs. Elderkin, joined with his in the Celestial Presence; and if the kindly letter of the Squire did not rank with the prayers, we may believe, without hardihood, that the recording angel took note of it, and gave credit on the account current of human charities.

XXXVIII.

MR. BRINDLOCK had, may be, exaggerated somewhat the story of Reuben's extravagances, but he was anxious that a word of caution should be dropped in his ear from some other lips than his own. The allowance from the Doctor, notwithstanding all the economies of Miss Eliza's frugal administration, would have been, indeed, somewhat narrow, and could by no means have kept Reuben upon his feet in the ambitious city-career upon which he had entered. But Mr. Brindlock had taken a great fancy to the lad, and besides the stipend granted for his duties about the counting-room, had given him certain shares in a few private ventures which had resulted very prosperously, — so prosperously, indeed, that the prudent merchant had determined to hold the full knowledge of the success in reserve. The prospects of Reuben, however, he being the favorite nephew of a well-established merchant, were regarded by the most indifferent observers as extremely flattering; and Mr. Bowrigg was not disposed to look unfavorably upon the young man's occasional attentions to the dashing Sophia.

But the Brindlocks, though winking at a great deal which the Doctor would have counted grievous sin, still were uneasy at the lad's growing dissoluteness of habit. Would the prayers of the good people of Ashfield help him?

It was some time in the month of September, of the same autumn in which poor Adèle lay sick at the parsonage, that Reuben came in one night, at twelve or thereabout, to his home at the Brindlocks', (living at this time in the neighborhood of Washington Square,) with his head cruelly battered, and altogether in a very piteous plight. Mrs. Brindlock, terribly frightened, — in her woman's way, — was for summoning the Doctor at once; but Reuben pleaded against it; he had been in a row, that was all, and had caught a big knock or two. The truth was, he had been upon one of his frolics with his old boon companions; and it so happened that one had spoken sneeringly of the parson's son, in a way which to the fiery young fellow seemed to cast ridicule upon the old gentleman. And thereupon Reuben, though somewhat maudlin with wine, yet with the generous spirit not wholly quenched in him, had entered upon a glowing little speech in praise of the old gentleman and of his profession, — a speech which, if it were garnished with here and there an objectionable expletive, was very earnest and did him credit.

"Good for Reuben!" the party had cried out. "Get him a pulpit!"

"Hang me, if he would n't preach better now than the old man!" said one.

"And a deuced sight livelier," said another.

"Hold your tongue, you blackguard!" burst out Reuben.

And from this the matter came very shortly to blows, in the course of which poor Reuben was severely punished, though he must have hit some hard blows, for he was wondrously active, and not a few boxing-lessons had gone to make up the tale of his city accomplishments.

Howbeit, he was housed now, in view of his black eye, for many days, and had ample time for reflection. In aid of this came a full sheet of serious expostulations from the Doctor, and that letter of advice which Squire Elderkin had promised, with a little warm-hearted postscript from good Mrs. Elderkin, — so unlike to the carefully modulated letters of Aunt Eliza! The Doctor's missive, very likely, did not impress him more than the scores that had gone before it; but there was a practical tact, and good-natured, common-sense homeliness, in the urgence of the Squire, which engaged all Reuben's attention; and the words of the good woman, his wife, were worth more than a sermon to him. "We all want," she writes, "to think well of

you, Reuben; we *do* think well of you. Don't disappoint us. I can't think of the cheery, bright face, that for so many an evening shone amid our household, as any thing but bright and cheery now. We all pray for your well-being and happiness, Reuben; and I *do* hope you have not forgotten to pray for it yourself."

And with the memory of the kindly woman which this letter called up came a pleasant vision of the winsome face of Rose, as she used to sit, with downcast eyes, beside her mother in the old house of Ashfield, — of Rose, as she used to lower upon him in their frolic, with those great hazel eyes sparkling with indignation. And if the vision did not quicken any lingering sentiment, it at the least gave a mellow tint to his thought, — a mellowness which even the hardness of Aunt Eliza could not wholly do away.

"I feel it my duty to write you, Reuben," she says, "and to inform you how very much we have all been shocked and astonished by the accounts which reach us of your continued indifference to religious duties, and your reckless extravagance. Let me implore you to be frugal and virtuous. If you learn to save now, the habit will be of very great service when you come to take your stand on the arena of life. I am aware that the temptations of a great city are almost innumerable; but I need hardly inform you that you will greatly consult your own interests and mitigate our

harassment of feeling by practicing a strict economy with your funds, and by attending regularly at church. You will excuse all errors in my writing, since I indite this by the sick-bed of Adèle."

Adèle, then, is sick; and upon that point alone in the Aunt's letter the thought of Reuben fastens. Adèle is sick! He knows where she must be lying, — in that little room at the parsonage looking out upon the orchard; there are white hangings to the bed; careful steps go up and down the stair-way. There had never been much illness in the parson's home, indeed, but certain early awful days Reuben just remembers; there were white bed-curtains, (he recalls those,) and a face as white lying beneath; the nurse, too, lifting a warning finger at him with a low "hist!" the knocker tied over thickly with a great muffler of cloth, lest the sound might come into the chamber; and then, awful stillness. On a morning later, all the windows are suddenly thrown open, and strange men bring a red coffin into the house, which, after a day or two, goes out borne by different people, who tread uneasily and awkwardly under the weight, but very softly; and after this a weary, weary loneliness. All which drifting over the mind of Reuben, and stirring his sensibilities with a quick rush of vague, boyish griefs, induces a train of melancholy religious musings, which, if they do no good, can hardly, it would seem, work

harm. Under their influence, indeed, (which lasted for several days,) he astonished his Aunt Mabel, on the next Sunday, by declaring his intention to attend church.

It is not the ponderous Dr. Mowry, fortunately or unfortunately, that he is called upon to listen to; but a younger man, of ripe age, indeed, but full of fervor and earnestness, and with a piercing magnetic quality of voice that electrifies from the beginning. And Reuben listens to his reading of the hymn, —

"Return, O wanderer! now return!"

with parted lips, and with an exaltation of feeling that is wholly strange to him. With the prayer it seems to him that all the religious influences to which he has ever been subject are slowly and surely converging their forces upon his mind; and, rapt as he is in the preacher's utterance, there come to him shadowy recollections of some tender admonition addressed to him by dear womanly lips in boyhood, which now, on a sudden, flames into the semblance of a Divine summons. Then comes the sermon, from the text, "My son, give me thine heart." There is no repulsive formality, no array of logical presentment to arouse antagonism of thought, but only inglowing enthusiasm, that transfuses the Scriptural appeal, and illuminates it with winning illustration. Reuben sees that the evangelist feels in his inmost soul what he utters; the thrill of his voice and

the touching earnestness of his manner declare it. It is as if our eager listener were, by every successive appeal, placed in full *rapport* with a great battery of religious emotions, and at every touch were growing into fuller and fuller entertainment of the truths which so fired and sublimed the speaker's utterance.

Do we use too gross a figure to represent what many people would call the influences of the Spirit? Heaven forgive us, if we do; but nothing can more definitely describe the seemingly electrical influences which were working upon the mind of Reuben, as he caught, ever and again, breaking through the torrent of the speaker's language, the tender, appealing refrain, "*My son, give me thine heart!*"

All thought of God the Avenger and of God the Judge, which had been so linked with most of his boyish instructions, seemed now to melt away in an aureole of golden light, through which he saw only God the Father! And the first prayer he ever learned comes to his mind with a grace and a meaning and a power that he never felt before.

"Whether we obey Him," (it is the preacher we quote,) "or distrust Him, or revile Him, or forget Him, or struggle to ignore Him, always, always He is our Father. And whatever we may do, however we may sin, however recreant we may be to early faith or early teaching, however unmoved by the voice of conscience,

— which is smiting on your hearts as it is on mine to-day, — whatever we are, or whatever we may be, yet, ever while life is in us, that great, serene voice of the All-Merciful is sounding in our ears, 'My son, give me thine heart!' Ay, the flowers repeat it in their bloom, the birds in their summer carol, the rejoicing brooks, and the seasons in their courses, all, all repeat it, 'My son, give me thine heart!'

"My hearers, this is real, this is true! It is our Father who says it; and we, unworthy ministers of His Word and messengers to declare His beneficence, repeat it for Him, 'My son, give me thine heart!' Not to crush, not to spurn, not for a toy. The great God asks your hearts because He wishes your gratitude and your love. Do you believe He asks it? Do you believe He asks it idly? What, then, does this appeal mean? It means, that God is love, — that you are His children, — straying, outcast, wretched, may be, but still His children, — and by the abounding love which is in Him, He asks your love in return. Will you give it?"

And Reuben says to himself, yet almost audibly, "I will."

The sermon was altogether such a one as to act with prodigious force upon so emotional a nature as that of Reuben. Yet we dare say there were gray-haired men in the church, and sallow-faced young men, who nodded their heads wisely and coolly, as they went out, and said,

"An eloquent sermon, quite; but not much argument in it." As if all men were to plod to heaven on the vertebræ of an inexorable logic, and not — God willing — to be rapt away thitherward by the clinging force of a glowing and confiding heart!

"Is this religion?" Reuben asked himself, as he went out of the church, with his pride all subdued. And the very atmosphere seemed to wear a new glory, and a new lien of brotherhood to tie him to every creature he met upon the thronged streets. All the time, too, was sounding in his ears (as if he had yielded full assent) the mellow and grateful cadence of the hymn,—

"Return, O wanderer! now return!"

XXXIX.

REUBEN wrote to the Doctor, under the influence of this new glow of feeling, in a way that at once amazed and delighted the good old gentleman. And yet there were ill-defined, but very decided, terrors and doubts in his delight. Dr. Johns, by nature as well as by education, was disposed to look distrustfully upon any sudden conviction of duty which had its spring in any extraordinary exaltation of feeling, rather than in that full intellectual seizure of the Divine Word, which it seemed to him could come only after a determined wrestling with those dogmas that to his mind were the aptest and compactest expression of the truth toward which we must agonize. The day of Pentecost showed a great miracle, indeed; but was not the day of miracles past?

The Doctor, however, did not allow his entertainment of a secret fear to color in any way his letters of earnest gratulation to his son. If God has miraculously snatched him from the ways that lead to destruction, (such was his thought,) let us rejoice.

"Be steadfast, my dear Reuben," he writes. "You

have now a cross to bear. Do not dishonor its holy character; do not faint upon the way. Our beloved Adèle, as you have been told, is trembling upon the verge of the grave. May God in His mercy spare her, until, at least, she gain some more fitting sense of the great mission of His Son, and of the divine scheme of atonement! I fear greatly that she has but loose ideas upon these all-important subjects. It pains me beyond belief to find her indifferent to the godly counsels of your pious aunt, which she does not fail to urge upon her, 'in season and out of season;' and she has shown a tenacity in guarding that wretched relic of her early life, the rosary and crucifix, which, I fear, augurs the worst. Pray for her, my son; pray that all the vanities and idolatries of this world may be swept from her thoughts."

And Reuben, still living in that roseate atmosphere of religious meditation, is shocked by this story of the danger of Adèle. Is he not himself in some measure accountable? In those days when they raced through the Catechism together, did he never provoke her mocking smiles by his sneers at the ponderous language? Did he not tempt her to some mischievous sally of mirth, on many a day when they were kneeling in couple about the family altar.

And in the flush of his exalted feeling he writes her how bitterly he deplores all this, and, borrowing his

language from the sermons he now listens to with greed, he urges Adèle "to plant her feet upon the Rock of Ages, to eschew all vanities, and to trust to those blessed promises which were given from the foundation of the world."

Indeed, there is a fervor in his feeling which pushes him into such extravagances of expression as the Doctor would have found it necessary to qualify, if Adèle, poor child, had not been by far too weak for their comprehension.

The Brindlocks were, of course, utterly amazed at this new aspect in the character of their pet young nephew from the country. Mr. Brindlock said, consolingly, to his wife, when the truth became only too apparent, "My dear, it's atmospheric, I think. It's a 'revival' season; there was such a one, I remember, in my young days."

(Mrs. Brindlock laughed at this quite merrily.)

"To be sure there was, my dear, and I was really quite deeply affected. Reuben will come out all right; we shall see him settling down soon to good merchant habits again."

But the *animus* of the new tendency was far stronger than Brindlock had supposed; and within a month Reuben had come to a quiet rupture with his city patron. The smack of worldliness was too strong for him. He felt that he must go back to his old home, and place

himself again under the instructions of the father whose counsels he had once so spurned.

"You don't say you mean to become a parson?" said Mr. Brindlock, more than ever astounded.

"It is very likely," said Reuben; "or possibly a missionary."

"Well, Reuben, if you must, you must. But I don't see things in that light. However, my boy, we 'll keep our little private ventures astir; you may need them some day."

And so they parted; and Reuben went home to Ashfield, taking an affectionate leave of his Aunt Mabel, who had been over-kind to him, and praying in his heart that that good, but exceedingly worldly woman, might some day look on serious things as he looked on them.

He had thought in his wild days, that, when he should go back to Ashfield for any lengthened stay, (for thus far his visits had been few and flying ones,) he should considerably astonish the old people there by his air and city cultivation. It is quite possible that he had laid by certain flaming cravats which he thought would have a killing effect in the country church, and anticipated a very handsome triumph by the easy swagger with which he would greet old Deacon Tourtelot and ask after the health of Miss Almira. But the hope of all such triumphs was now dropped

utterly. Such things clearly belonged to the lusts of the eye and the pride of life. He even left behind him some of the most flashy articles of his attire, with the request to Aunt Mabel that she would bestow them upon some needy person, or, in default of this, make them over to the Missionary Society for distribution among the heathen, — a purpose for which some of them, by reason of their brilliant colors, were certainly most admirably adapted. Under his changed view of life, it appeared to Reuben that every unnecessary indulgence, whether of dress or food, was a sin. With the glowing enthusiasm of youth, he put such beautiful construction upon the rules of Christian faith as would hardly survive the rough every-day wear of the world. Even the stiff dignity of Dr. Mowry he was inclined to count only an accidental incrustation of manner, beneath which the heart of the parson was all aglow with the tenderest benevolence. We hope he may have been right in this; it is certain, that, if he could carry forward the same loving charity to the end of his days, he would have won the best third of the elements of a Christian career, without respect to dogmas.

So Reuben goes back to Ashfield with a very modest and quiet bearing. He is to look with other eyes now upon the life there, and to judge how far it will sustain his new-found religious sympathies. All meet him kindly. Old Squire Elderkin, who chances to be

the first to greet him as he alights from the coach, shakes him warmly by the hand, and taps him patronizingly upon the shoulder.

"Welcome home again, Reuben! Well, well, they thought you were given over to bad courses; but it's all right now, I hear; quite upon the other tack, eh, Reuben? That's well, my good fellow; that's well."

And Reuben thanked him, thinking perhaps how odd it was that this worldly old gentleman, of whom he had thought, since his late revulsion of feeling, with a good deal of quiet pity, should commend what was so foreign to his own habit. There were, then, some streaks of good-natured worldliness which tallied with Christian duty. The serene, kindly look of Mrs. Elderkin was in itself the tenderest welcome; and it was an ennobling thought to Reuben, that he had at last placed himself (or fancied he had) upon the same moral plane with that good woman. As for Rose, the joyous, frolicsome, charming Rose, whom he had thought at one time to electrify by his elegant city accomplishments, — was not even the graceful Rose a veteran in the Christian army in which he had but now enlisted? Why, then, should she show timidity and shyness at this meeting with him? Yet her little fingers had a quick tremor in them as she took his hand, and a swift change of color (he knew it of old) ran over her face like a rosy cloud.

"It is delightful to think that Reuben is safe at last," said Mrs. Elderkin, after he had gone.

"Yes, mamma," said Rose.

"It must be a great delight to them all at the parsonage."

"I suppose so, mamma. I wish Phil were here," said Rose again, in a plaintive little tone.

"I wish he were, my child; it might have a good influence upon him: and poor Adèle, too; she must surely listen to Reuben, he is so earnest and impassioned. Don't you think so, Rose?"

Rose is working with nervous rapidity.

"But, my child," says the mother, "are you not sewing that breadth upon the wrong side?"

True enough, upon the wrong side, — so many weary stitches to undo!

Miss Eliza had shown a well-considered approval of Reuben's change of opinions; but this had not forbidden a certain reserve of worldly regret that he should give up so promising a business career. She had half hinted as much to the Doctor.

"I do not see, brother," she had said, "that his piety will involve the abandonment of mercantile life."

"His piety," said the Doctor, "if it be of the right stamp, will involve an obedience to conscience."

And there the discussion had rested. The spinster received Reuben with much warmth, in which her

stately proprieties of manner, however, were never for one moment forgotten.

Adèle, who was now fortunately in a fair way of recovery, but who was still very weak, and who looked charmingly in her white chamber-dress with its simple black belt, received him with a tender-heartedness of manner which he had never met in her before. The letter of Reuben had been given her, and, with all its rawness of appeal, had somehow touched her religious sentiment in a way it had never been touched before. He had put so much of his youthful enthusiasm into his language, it showed such an elasticity of hope and joy, as impressed her very strangely. It made the formal homilies of Miss Eliza seem more harsh than ever. She had listened, in those fatiguing and terrible days of illness, to psalms long drawn out, and wearily; but here was some wild bird that chanted a glorious carol in her ear, — a carol that seemed touched with heaven's own joy. And under its influence — exaggerated as it was by extreme youthful emotion — she seemed to see the celestial gates of jasper and pearl swing open before her, and the beckonings of the great crowd of celestial inhabitants to enter and enjoy.

For a long time she had been hovering (how nearly she did not know) upon the confines of the other world; but with a vague sense that its mysteries might open upon her in any hour, she had, in her sane intervals,

ranked together the promises and penalties that had been set before her by the good Doctor: now worrying her spirit, as it confronted some awful catechismal dogma that it sought vainly to solve; and then, from sheer weakness and disappointment, seizing upon the symbol of the cross, (of which the effigy was always near at hand,) and by a kiss and a tear seeking to ally her fainting heart with the mystic company of the elect who would find admission to the joys of paradise. But the dogmas were vain, because she could not grapple them to her heart; the cross was vain, because it was an empty symbol; the kisses and the tears left her groping blindly for the key that would surely unlock for her the wealth of the celestial kingdom. In this attitude of mind, wearied by struggle and by fantasies, came to her the letter of Reuben, — the joyous outburst of a pioneer who had found the way. She never once doubted that the good Doctor had found it, too, — but so long ago, and by so hard a road, that she despaired of following in his steps. But Reuben had leaped to the conquest, and carried a blithe heart with him. Surely, then, there must be a joy in believing.

"I thank you very much for your letter, Reuben," said Adèle, and she looked eagerly into his face for traces of that triumph which so glittered throughout his letter.

And she did not look in vain; for, whether it were

from the warm, electric touch of those white, thin fingers of hers, or the eager welcome in her eyes, or from more sacred cause, a great joy shone in his face, — a joy that from thenceforward they began to share in common. At last — at last, a bright illumination was spread over the dreary teachings of these last years. Not a doubt, not a penalty, not a mystic, blind utterance of the Catechism, but the glowing enthusiasm of Reuben invested it with cheery promise, or covered it with the wonderful glamour of his hope. Between these two young hearts — the one, till then, all doubt and weariness, and the other, just now, all impassioned exuberance — there came a grafting, by virtue of which the religious sentiment in Adèle shot away from all the severities around her into an atmosphere of peace and joy.

The Doctor saw it, and wondered at the abounding mercies of God. The spinster saw it, and rejoiced at the welding of this new link in the chain of her purposes. The village people all saw it, and said among themselves, "If he has won her from the iniquities of the world, he can win her for a wife, if he will."

And the echoes of such speeches come, as they needs must, to the ear of Rose, without surprising her, so much do they seem the echo of her own thought; and if her heart may droop a little under it, she conceals it bravely, and abates no jot in her abounding love for Adèle.

"I wish Phil were here," she says in the privacy of her home.

"So do I, darling," says the mother, and looks at her with a tender inquisitiveness that makes the sweet girl flinch, and affect for a moment a noisy gayety, which is not in her heart.

Rose! Rose! are you not taking wrong stitches again?

XL.

IT would lead us far too widely from the simple order of our narrative to detail the early history of Madame Arles; and although the knowledge of it might serve in some degree to explain the peculiar interest which that poor woman has shown in the motherless Adèle, we choose rather to leave the matter unexplained, and to regard the invalid enthusiast as one whose sympathies have fastened in a strange way upon the exiled French girl, and grow all the stronger by the difficulties in the way of their full expression.

Madame Arles did not forego either her solicitude or the persistence of her inquiry under the harsh rebuff of the Doctor. Again and again, after nightfall, he saw her figure flitting back and forth upon the street, over against Adèle's window; and the good man perplexed himself vainly with a hundred queries as to what such strange conduct could mean. The village physician, too, had been addressed by this anxious lady with a tumult of questionings; and the old gentleman — upon whose sympathies the eager inquirer had won an easier approach than upon those of the severe parson

— had taken hearty satisfaction in assuring her, within a few days after the night interview we have detailed, that the poor girl was mending, was out of danger, in fact, and would be presently in a condition to report for herself.

After this, and through the long convalescence, Madame Arles was seen more rarely upon the village street. Yet the town gossips were busy with the character and habits of the "foreign lady." Her devotion to the little child of the outcast Boody woman was most searchingly discussed at all the tea-tables of the place; and it was special object of scandal, that the foreign lady, neglectful of the Sabbath ministrations of the parson, was frequently to be seen wandering about the fields in "meeting-time," attended very likely by that poor wee thing of a child, upon whose head the good people all visited, with terrible frowns, the sins of the parents. No woman, of whatever condition, could maintain a good reputation in Ashfield under such circumstances. Dame Tourtelot enjoyed a good sharp fling at the "trollop."

"I allers said she was a bad woman," submitted the stout Dame; and her audience (consisting of the Deacon and Miss Almira) would have had no more thought of questioning the implied decision than of cutting down the meeting-house steeple.

"And I'm afeard," continued the Dame, "that

Adeel is n't much better; she keeps a crucifix in her chamber! — need n't to look at me, Tourtelot! — Miss Johns told me all about it, and I don't think the parson should allow it. I think you oughter speak to the parson, Tourtelot."

The good Deacon scratched his head, over the left ear, in a deprecating manner.

"And I 've heerd this Miss Arles has been a-writin' to Mr. Maverick, Adeel's father, — need n't to look at me, Tourtelot! — the postmaster told me; and she 's been receivin' furren letters, — filled with Popery, I ha'n't a doubt."

In short, the poor woman bore a most execrable reputation; and Doctor Johns, good as he was, took rather a secret pride in such startling confirmation of his theories in respect to French character. He wrote to his friend Maverick, informing him that his suspicions in regard to Madame Arles were, he feared, "only too well founded. Her neglect of Sabbath ordinances, her unhallowed associations, her extreme violence of language, (which was on a signal occasion uttered in my hearing,) have satisfied me that your distrust was only too reasonable. I shall guard Adaly from all further intercourse with extreme care."

Indeed, Miss Eliza and the Doctor (the latter from the best of motives) had scrupulously kept from Adèle all knowledge of Madame Arles's impatient and angry

solicitude during her illness. And when Adèle, on those first sunny days of her convalescence, learned incidentally that her countrywoman was still a resident of the village, it pained her grievously to think that she had heard no tender message from her during all that weary interval of sickness, and she was more than half inclined (though she did not say this) to adopt the harshest judgments of the spinster. There was not a visitor at the parsonage, indeed, but, if the name were mentioned, sneered at the dark-faced, lonely woman, who was living such a godless life, and associating, as if from sheer bravado, with those who were under the ban of all the reputable people of Ashfield.

When, therefore, Adèle, on one of her early walks with Reuben, after her recovery was fully established, encountered, in a remote part of the village, Madame Arles, trailing after her the little child of shame, — and yet darting toward the French girl, at first sight, with her old effusion, — Adèle met her coolly, so coolly, indeed, that the poor woman was overcome, and, hurrying the little child after her, disappeared with a look of wretchedness upon her face that haunted Adèle for weeks and months. Thereafter very little was seen of Madame Arles upon the principal street of the village; and her avoidance of the family of the parsonage was as studied and resolute as either the Doc-

tor or Miss Eliza could have desired. A moment of chilling indifference on the part of Adèle had worked stronger repulse than all the harsh rebuffs of the elder people; but of this the kind-hearted French girl was no way conscious: yet she *was* painfully conscious of a shadowy figure that still, from time to time, stole after her in her twilight walks, and that, if she turned upon it, shrank stealthily from observation. There was a mystery about the whole matter which oppressed the poor girl with a sense of terror. She could not doubt that the interest of her old teacher in herself had been a kindly one; but whatever it might have been, that interest was now so furtive, and affected such concealment, that she was half led to entertain the cruellest suspicions of Miss Eliza, who did not fail to enlarge upon the godlessness of the stranger's life, and to set before Adèle the thousand alluring deceits by which Satan sought to win souls to himself.

Rumor, one day, brought the story, that the foreign woman, who had been the subject of so much village scandal, lay ill, and was fast failing; and on hearing this, Adèle would have broken away from all the parsonage restraints, to offer what consolations she could: nor would the good Doctor have repelled her; but the rumor, if not false, was, in his view, grossly exaggerated; since, on the Sunday previous only, some offi-

cious member of his parish had reported the Frenchwoman as strolling over the hills, decoying with her that little child of her fellow-lodger, which she had tricked out in the remnants of her French finery, and was thus wantoning throughout the holy hours of service.

A few days later, however, the Doctor came in with a serious and perplexed air; he laid his cane and hat upon the little table within the door, and summoned Adèle to the study.

"Adaly, my child," said he, "this unfortunate countrywoman of yours is really failing fast. I learn as much from the physician. She has sent a request to see you. She says that she has an important message, a dying message, to give you."

A strange tremor ran over the frame of Adèle.

"I fear, my child, that she is still bound to her idolatries; she has asked that you bring to her the little bauble of a rosary, which, I trust, Adaly, you have learned to regard as a vanity."

"Yet I have it still, New Papa; she shall have it;" and she turned to go.

"My child, I cannot bear that you should go as the messenger of a false faith, and to carry to her, as it were, the seal of her idolatries. You shall follow her wishes, Adaly; but I must attend you, my child, were it only to protest against such vanities, and to declare

to her, if it be not too late, the truth as it is in the Gospel."

Adèle was only too willing; for she was impressed with a vague terror at thought of this interview, and of its possible revelations; and they set off presently in company. It was a chilly day of later autumn. Only a few scattered, tawny remnants of the summer verdure were hanging upon the village trees, and great rows of the dead and fallen leaves were heaped here and there athwart the path, where some high wall kept them clear of the winds; and as the walkers tramped through them, they made a ghostly rustle, and whole platoons of them were set astir to drift again until some new eddy caught and stranded them in other heaps. Adèle, more and more disturbed in mind, said, —

"It's such a dreary day, New Papa!"

"Is it the thought that one you know may lie dying now makes it dreary, my child?"

"Partly that, I dare say," returned Adèle; "and then the wind so tosses about these dead leaves. I wish it were always spring."

"There is a country," said the parson, "where spring reigns eternal. I hope you may, find it Adaly; I hope your poor countrywoman may find it; but I fear, I fear."

"Is it, then, so dreadful to be a Romanist?"

"It is dreadful, Adaly, to doubt the free grace of God, — dreadful to trust in any offices of men, or in

tithes of mint and anise and cumin, — dreadful to look anywhere for absolution from sin but in the blood of the Lamb. I have a conviction, my child," continued he, in a tone even more serious, "that the poor woman has not lived a pure life before God, or even before the world. Even at this supreme moment of her life, if it be such, I should be unwilling to trust you alone with her, Adaly."

Adèle, trembling, — partly with the chilling wind, and partly with an ill-defined terror of — she knew not what, — nestled more closely to the side of the old gentleman; and he, taking her little hand in his, as tenderly as a lover might have done, said, —

"Adaly, at least *your* trust in God is firm, is it not?"

"It is! it is!" said she.

The house, as we have said, lay far out upon the river-road, within a strip of ill-tended garden-ground, surrounded by a rocky pasture. A solitary white-oak stood in the line of straggling wall that separated garden from pasture, and showed still a great crown of leaves blanched by the frosts, and shivering in the wind. An artemisia, with blackened stalks, nodded its draggled yellow blossoms at one angle of the house, while a little company of barn-door fowls stood closely grouped under the southern lea, with heads close drawn upon their breasts, idling and winking in the sunshine.

The young mother of the vagrant little one who had

attracted latterly so much of the solitary woman's regard received them with an awkward welcome.

"Miss Arles is poorly, to-day," she said, "and she 's flighty. She keeps Arthur" (the child) "with her. You hear how she 's a-chatterin' now." (The door of her chamber stood half open.) "Arty seems to understand her. I 'm sure I don't."

Nor, indeed, did the Doctor, to whose ear a torrent of rapid French speech was like the gibberish of demons. He never doubted 't was full of wickedness. Not so Adèle. There were sweet sounds to her ear in that swift flow of Provençal speech, — tender, endearing epithets, that seemed like the echo of music heard long ago, — pleasant banter of words that had the rhythm of the old godmother's talk.

"Ah, you 're a gay one! Now — put on your velvet cap — so. We 'll find a bride for you some day, — some day, when you 're a tall, proud man. Who 's your father, Arty? Pah! it 's nothing. You 'll make somebody's heart ache all the same, — eh, Arty, boy?"

"Do you understand her, Miss Maverick?" says the mother.

"Not wholly," said Adèle; and the two visitors stepped in noiselessly.

The child, bedizened with finery, was standing upon the bed where the sick woman lay, with a long feather from the cock's tail waving from his cap. Madame

Arles, with the hot flush of the fever upon her, looked — saving the thinness — as she might have looked twenty years before. And as her flashing eye caught the new comers, her voice broke out wildly again, —

"Here 's the bride, and here 's the priest! Where 's the groom? Where 's the groom? Where 's the groom, I say?"

The violence of her manner made poor Adèle shiver.

The boy laughed as he saw it, and said, —

"She 's afraid! *I'm* not afraid."

"Oh, no!" said the crazed woman, turning on him. "You 're a man, Arty: men are not afraid, — you wanton, you wild one! Where 's the groom?" said she again, addressing the Doctor, fiercely.

"My good woman," says the old gentleman, "we have come to offer you the consolations that are only to be found in the Gospel of Christ."

"Pah! you 're a false priest!"—defiantly. "Where 's the groom?"

And Adèle, hoping to pacify the poor woman, draws from her reticule the little rosary, and, holding it before the eyes of the sufferer, says, timidly, —

"My dear Madam, it is I, — Adèle; I have brought what you asked of me; I have come to comfort you."

And the woman, over whose face there ran instantly

a marvelous change, snatched the rosary, and pressed it convulsively to her lips; then, looking for a moment yearningly, with that strange double gaze of hers, upon the face of Adèle, she sprang toward her, and, wreathing her arms about her, drew her fast upon her bosom, —

"*Ma fille! ma pauvre fille!*"

The boy slipped down from the bed, — his little importance being over, — and was gone. The Doctor's lips moved in silent prayer for five minutes or more, wholly undisturbed, while the twain were locked in that embrace. Then the old gentleman, stooping, said, —

"Adaly, will she listen to me now?"

And Adèle, turning a frightened face to him, whispered, —

"She 's sleeping; unclasp her hands; she holds me tightly."

The Doctor, with tremulous fingers, does her bidding.

Adèle, still whispering, says, —

"She 's calm now; she 'll talk with us when she wakes, New Papa."

"My poor child," said the Doctor, solemnly, and with a full voice, "she 'll never wake again."

And Adèle, turning, — in a maze of terror, as she thought of that death-clasp, — saw that her eyes had fallen open, — open, and fixed, and lusterless. So

quietly Death had come upon his errand, and accomplished it, and gone; while without, the fowls, undisturbed, were still blinking idly in the sunshine under the lea of the wall, and the yellow chrysanthemums were fluttering in the wind.

XLI.

IN the winter of 1838–39, Adèle, much to the delight of Dr. Johns, avowed at last her wish to join herself to the little church-flock over which the good parson still held serenely his office of shepherd. And as she told him quietly of her desire, sitting before him there in the study of the parsonage, without urgence upon his part, it was as if a bright gleam of sunshine had darted suddenly through the wintry clouds, and bathed both of them in its warm effulgence. The good man, rising from his chair and crossing over to her place, touched her forehead with as tender and loving a kiss as ever he had bestowed upon the lost Rachel.

He had seen too closely the development of her Christian faith to disturb her with various questionings. She rejoiced in this; for even then, with all the calm serenity of her trust, it was doubtful if her answers could have fully satisfied the austerities of his theological traditions. Nay, she doubted, even, if the exuberance of her spirits would not sometimes, in days to come, bound over the formalities of his Sunday observ-

ance, and startle a corrective glance; but withal she knew her trust was firm, and on this had full repose. Even the little rosary, so obnoxious to the household of the parsonage, was, by its terrible association with the death-scene of Madame Arles, endeared to her tenfold; and she could not forbear the hope that the poor woman, at the very last, by that clinging kiss upon the image of Christ, told a prayer that might give access to His abounding mercy.

Nor did Adèle seek to comprehend in their entireness all those wearisome dogmatic utterances which were familiar to her tongue, and which she could understand might form the steps to fullness of belief for the rigorous mind of the Doctor: for herself there was other ladder of approach, in finding which the emotional experiences of Reuben had been of such signal service.

To Reuben himself those experiences brought a temporary exhilaration, but as yet no peace. He has a vague notion creeping over him, with fearfully chilling effect, that his sensibilities have been wrought upon rather than his reason; a confused sense of having yielded to enthusiasms, which, if they once grow cool, will leave him to slump back into a mire worse than the old. Therefore he must, by all possible means, keep them at fever-heat. A dim consciousness, however, possessed him, that, for the feeding of the neces-

sary fires, there would be needed an immense consumption of fuel, — such stock as an ordinary experience could hardly hope to supply. By degrees, this consciousness took the force of conviction, and he became painfully sensible of his own limitations. There was a weary, matter-of-fact world to struggle with, in whose homely cares and interests he must needs be a partner. He could not wear the gyves of a Gabriel on the muddy streets of life, or carry the ecstatic language of praise into the world's talk: if he could, he would be reckoned insane, and not unjustly, since sanity is, after all, but a term to express the average normal condition of mind. He looked with something like envy upon the serene contentment of Adèle. He lived like an ascetic; he sought, by reading of all manner of exultant religious experience, to keep alive the ferment of the autumn. "If only death were near," he said to himself, "with what a blaze of hope one might go out!" But death was not near, — or, at least, life and its perplexing duties were nearer. The intensity of his convictions somehow faded, and they lost their gorgeous hue, under the calm doctrinal sermons of the parson. If the glory of the promises and the tenderness of Divine entreaty were to be always dropping mellifluously on his ear, as upon that solemn Sunday of the summer, it might be well. But it is not thus; and even were the severe quiet of the Ashfield Sundays

lighted up by the swift and burning words of such fiery evangelism, yet six solid working-days roll over upon the heel of every Sunday, — in which he sees good Deacon Tourtelot in shirt-sleeves driving some sharp bargain for his two-year-old steers, or the stout Dame hectoring some stray peddler by the hour for the fall of a penny upon his wares, and wonders where their Christian largeness of soul is gone. Is the matter real to him? And if real, where is the peace? Shall he consult the good Doctor? He is met straightway with an array of the old catechismal formulas, clearly stated, well argued, but brushing athwart his mind like a dusty wind. The traditional dislikes of his boyhood have armed him against all such, *cap-a-pie*. In this strait, he wanders over the hills in search of loneliness, and a volume of Tillotson he carries with him is all unread. Nature speaks more winningly, but scarce more helpfully.

Adèle, with a quick eye, sees the growing unrest, and, with a great weight of gratitude upon her heart, says, timidly, —

"Can I help you, Reuben?"

"No, thank you, Adèle. I understand you; I 'm in a boggle, — that 's all."

The father, too, at a hint from Adèle, (whose perceptions are so much quicker,) sees at last how the matter stands.

"Reuben," he says, "these struggles of yours are struggles with the Great Adversary of Souls. I trust, my son, you will not allow him to have the mastery."

It was kindly said and earnestly said, but touched the core of the son's moral disquietude no more than if it were the hooting of an owl. Yet, for all this, Reuben makes a brave struggle to wear with an outward calm the burden of the professions he has made, — a terrible burden, when he finds what awful chasms in his faith have been overleaped by his vaulting Quixotic fervor. Wearily he labors to bridge them across, with over-much reading, there in the quiet study of the parsonage, of Newton and Tillotson and Butler; and he takes a grim pleasure (that does not help him) in following the amiable argumentation of Paley. It pains him grievously to think what humiliation would possess the old Doctor, if he but knew into what crazy currents his boy's thoughts were drifting over the pages of his beloved teachers. But a man cannot live a deceit, even for charity's sake, without its making outburst some day, and wrecking all the fine preventive barriers which kept it in.

The outburst came at last in the quiet of the Ashfield study. Reuben had been poring for hours — how wearily! how vainly! — over the turgid dogmas of one of the elder divines, when he suddenly dashed the book upon the floor.

"Confound the theologies! I'll have no more of them!"

The Doctor dropped his pen, and stared as if a serpent had stung him.

"My son! Reuben! Reuben!"

It was not so much the expression that had shocked him, as it was the action and the defiance in his eye.

"I can't help it, father. It's the Evil One, perhaps. If it be, I'll cheat him, by making a clean breast of it. I can't abide the stuff; I can't see my way through it."

"My son, it is your sin that blinds you."

"Very likely," says Reuben.

"It was not thus with you three months ago, Reuben," continues the Doctor, in a softened tone.

"No, father, there was a strange light around me in those days. It seemed to me that the path lay clear and shining through all the maze. If Death had caught me then, I think I could have sung hosannas with the saints. It was a beautiful dream. It's faded dismally, father, — as if the Devil had painted it."

The old man shuddered, and lifted his hands, as he was wont to do in his most earnest pleas at the Throne of Grace.

"The muddle of the world and the theologies has come in since," continued Reuben, "and the base professions I see around me, and the hypocrisies and the

cant, have taken away the glow. It 's all a weariness and a confusion, and that 's the solemn truth."

The Doctor said, measuredly, (as if the Book were before him,) —

"' *Some seeds fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*' Reuben! Reuben! we must agonize to enter into the strait gate!"

"It 's a long agony," said Reuben; and he rose and paced back and forth for a time; then suddenly stopping before the Doctor, he laid his hand upon his shoulder, (the boy was of manly height now, and overtopped the old gentleman by an inch,) — "Father, it grieves me to pain you, — indeed it does; but truth is truth. I have told you my story; but if you wish it, I will live outwardly as if no such talk had passed. I will respect as much as ever all your religious observances, and no person shall be the wiser."

"I would not have you practice hypocrisy, my son; but I would not have you withdraw yourself from any of the appointed means of grace."

And at this Reuben went out, — out far upon the hills, from which he saw the village roofs, and the spire, and the naked tree-tops, the fields all bare and brown, the smoke of a near house curling lazily into

the sky; and the only sound that broke the solemn stillness was the drumming of a partridge in the woods or the harsh scream of a belated jay.

Never had Reuben been more kind or attentive to the personal wants of the old gentleman than on the days which followed upon this interview. There was something almost like a daughter's solicitude in his watchfulness. On the next Sunday the Doctor preached with an emotion that was but poorly controlled, and which greatly mystified his people. Twice in the afternoon his voice came near to failing. Reuben knew where the grief lay, but wore a composed face; and as he supported the old gentleman home after service, he said, (but not so loudly that Adèle could hear, who was tripping closely behind,) —

"Father, I grieve for you, — upon my soul I do; but it 's fate."

"Fate, Reuben?" said the Doctor, but with a less guarded voice, — "fate? God only is fate!"

The Doctor was too much mortified by this revelation of Reuben's present state of feeling to make it the subject of conversation, even with Miss Eliza, and much less with the elders of his flock. To Squire Elderkin, indeed, whose shrewd common sense he had learned to value even in its bearings upon the "weightier matters of the law," he had dropped some desponding reflections in regard to the willful impetu-

osity of his poor son Reuben, from which the shrewd Squire at once suspected the difficulty.

"It 's the blood of the old Major," he said. "Let it work, Doctor, let it work!"

From which observation, it must be confessed, the good man derived very little comfort.

Miss Eliza, though she is not made a confidante in these latter secrets of the study, cannot, however, fail to see that Reuben's constancy to the Doctor's big folios is on the wane, and that symptoms of his old boyish recklessness occasionally show themselves under the reserve which has grown out of his later experiences. She has hopes from this — true to her keen worldly wisdom — that the abandoned career of the city may yet win his final decision. But her moral perceptions are not delicate enough to discover the great and tormenting wrangle of his thought. She ventures from time to time, as on his return, and from sharp sense of duty, some wiry, stereotyped religious reflections, which set his whole moral nature on edge. Nor is this the limit of her blindness: perceiving, as she imagines she does, the ripening of all her plans with respect to himself and Adèle, she thinks to further the matter by dropping hints of the rare graces of Adèle and of her brilliant prospects, — assuring him how much that young lady's regard for him has been increased since his conversion, (which word has

to Reuben just now a dreary and most detestable sound,) and in a way which she counts playful, but which to him is *agaçant* to the last degree, she forecasts the time when Reuben will have his pretty French wife, and a rich one.

Left to himself, the youth would very likely have found enough to admire in the face and figure and pleasantly subdued enthusiasm of Adèle; but the counter-irritant of the spinster's speech drove him away on many an evening to the charming fireside of the Elderkins, where he spent not a few beguiling hours in listening to the talk of the motherly mistress of the household, and in watching the soft hazel eyes of Rose, as they lifted in eager wonderment at some of his stories of the town, or fell (the long lashes hiding them with other beauty) upon the work where her delicate fingers plied with a white swiftness that teased him into trains of thought which were not wholly French.

Adèle has taken a melancholy interest in decking the grave of the exiled lady, which she has insisted upon doing out of her own resources, and thus has doubled the little legacy which Madame Arles had left to the outcast woman and child with whom she had joined her fate, and who, with good reason, wept her death bitterly. Hour upon hour Adèle pondered over that tragic episode, tasking herself to imagine

what message the dying woman could have had to communicate, and wondering if the future would ever clear up the mystery. To the good Doctor it seemed only a strange Providence, by which the religious convictions of Adèle should be deepened and made sure. And in no way were the results of those convictions more beautifully apparent than in the efforts of Adèle to overcome her antipathies to the spinster. It is doubtful, indeed, if a bolder challenge can be made to the Christian graces of any character whatever than that which demands the conquest of social prejudices which have grown into settled aversion. With all the stimulus of her new Christian endeavor, Adèle sought to think charitably of Miss Eliza. Yet it was hard; always, that occasional cold kiss of the spinster had for Adèle an iron imprint, which drove her warm blood away, instead of summoning it to response.

For her, Miss Eliza's staple praises of Reuben, and her adroit stories of the admiration and attachment of Mrs. Brindlock for her nephew, were distasteful to the last degree. Coarse natures never can learn upon what fine threads the souls of the sensitive are strung.

Adèle felt a tender gratitude toward Reuben, which it seemed to her the boisterous affection of the spinster could never approach. She apprehended his spiritual perplexities more keenly than the austere aunt, and

saw with what strange ferment his whole nature was vexed. Had he been a brother by blood, she could not have felt for him more warmly. And if she ever allowed herself to guess at a nearer tie, it was not to Miss Eliza that she would have named the guess, — not even, thus far, to herself. As yet there was a ripe fullness in her heart that felt no wound, — at least no wound in which her hope rankled. Whether Reuben were present or away, her songs rose, with a sweeter, a serener, and a loftier cheer than of old under the roof of the parsonage; and, as of old, the Doctor laid down his book and listened, as if an angel sang.

XLII.

IN the summer of 1840 the Doctor received a letter from Maverick which overwhelmed him with consternation; and its revelations, we doubt not, will prove as great a surprise to our readers.

"My good friend Johns," he wrote, "I owe you a debt of gratitude which I can never repay; you have shown such fatherly interest in my dear child, — you have so guided and guarded her, — you have so abundantly filled the place which, though it was my duty, I had never the worthiness to fill, that I have no words to thank you. And now you have crowned all by giving her that serene trust" —

"Not I! not I!" says the Doctor to himself, — "only God's mercy, — God's infinite mercy!" — and he continues, "that serene trust in Heaven which will support her under all trials. Poor child, she will need it all!"

"And that this man," pursues the Doctor meditatively, "who thinks so wisely, should be given over still to the things of this world!"

"I hear still further, — from what sources it will be

unnecessary for me now to explain, — that a close intimacy has grown up latterly between your son Reuben and my dear Adèle, and that this intimacy has provoked village rumors of the possibility of some nearer tie. These rumors may be, perhaps, wholly untrue; I hope to Heaven they are, and my informant may have exaggerated only chance reports. But the knowledge of them, vague as they are, has stimulated me to a task which I ought far sooner to have accomplished, and which, as a man of honor, I can no longer defer. I know that you think lightly of any promptings to duty which spring only from a sense of honor; and before you shall have finished my letter I fear that you will be tempted to deny me any claim to the title. Indeed, it has been the fear of forfeiting altogether your regard that has kept me thus far silent, and has caused me to delay, from year to year, that full explanation which I can no longer with any propriety or justice withhold.

"I go back to the time when I first paid you a visit at your parsonage. I never shall forget the cheery joyousness of that little family scene at your fireside, the winning modesty and womanliness of your lost Rachel, and the serenity and peace that lay about your household. It was to me, fresh from the vices of Europe, like some charming Christian idyl, in whose atmosphere I felt myself not only an alien, but a profane intruder; for, at that very time, I was bound by

one of those criminal *liaisons* to which so many strangers on the Continent are victims. Your household and your conversation prompted a hope and a struggle for better things. But, my dear Johns, the struggle was against a whole atmosphere of vice. And it was only when I had broken free of entanglement, that I learned, with a dreary pang, that I was the father of a child, — my poor, dear Adèle!"

The Doctor crumpled the letter in his hand, and smote upon his forehead. Never, in his whole life, had he known such strange revulsion of feeling. With returning calmness he smooths the letter upon his desk, and continues: —

"I expect your condemnation, of course; yet listen to my story throughout. That child I might have left to the tender mercies of the world, might have ignored it, and possibly forgotten its existence. Many a man, with fewer stains on his conscience than I have, would have done this, and met the world and old friends cheerily. But then the memory of you and of your teachings somehow kindled in me what I counted a worthier purpose. I vowed that the child should, if possible, lead a guileless life, and should no way suffer, so far as human efforts could prevent, for the sins of the parents. The mother assented, with what I counted a guilty willingness, to my design, and I placed her secretly under the charge of the old godmother of whom Adèle must often have spoken.

"But I was no way content that she should grow up under French influences, and to the future knowledge (inevitable in these scenes) of the ignominy of her birth. And if that knowledge were ever to come, I could think of no associations more fitted to make her character stanch to bear it than those that belong to the rigid and self-denying virtues which are taught in a New England parish. Is it strange that I recurred at once to your kindness, Johns? Is it strange that I threw the poor child upon your charity?

"It is true, I used deceit, — true that I did not frankly reveal the truth; but see how much was at stake! I knew in what odium such trespasses were held in the serenity of your little towns; I knew, that, if you, with Spartan courage, should propose acceptance of the office, your family would reject it. I knew that your love of truth would be incapable of the concealments or subterfuges which might be needed to protect the poor child from the tongue of scandal. In short, I was not willing to take the risk of a repulse. 'Such deceit as there may be,' I said, 'is my own. My friend Johns can never impute it as a sin to Adèle.' I am sure you will not now. Again, I felt that I was using deceit (if you will allow me to say it) in a good cause, and that you yourself, when once the shock of discovery should be past, could never reprimand yourself for your faithful teachings to an erring child, but must count

her, in your secret heart, only another of the wandering lambs which it was your duty and pleasure to lead into the true fold. Had she come to you avowedly as the child of sin, with all the father's and mother's guilt reeking upon her innocent head, could you have secured to her, my dear Johns, that care and consideration and devotion which have at last ripened her Christian character, and made her proof against slander?"

Here the Doctor threw down the letter again, and paced up and down the room.

"The child of sin! the child of sin! Who could have thought it? Yet does not Maverick reason true? Does not Beelzebub at times reason true? Adaly! my poor, poor Adaly!"

"It seemed to me," the letter continued, "that there might possibly be no need that either you or my poor child should ever know the whole truth in this matter; and I pray (with your leave) that it may be kept from her even now. You will understand, perhaps, from what I have said, why my visits have been more rare than a fatherly feeling would seem to demand: to tell truth, I have feared the familiar questionings of her prattling girlhood. Mature years shrink from perilous inquiry, I think, with an instinct which does not belong to the freshness of youth.

"But from your ears, in view of the rumors that have come to my hearing, I could not keep the knowl-

edge longer. I cannot, my dear Johns, read your heart, and say whether or not you will revolt at the idea of any possible family tie between your son and my poor Adèle. But whatever aspect such possibility may present to your mind, I can regard it only with horror. If I have deceived you, the deceit shall reach no such harm as this. Whatever your Christian forgiveness or your love for Adèle (and I know she is capable of winning your love) may suggest, I can never consent that any stain should be carried upon your family record by any instrumentality of mine. I must beg, therefore, that, if the rumor be true, you use all practicable means, even to the use of your parental authority, in discountenancing and forbidding such intimacy. If necessary to this end, and Reuben be still resident at the parsonage, I pray you to place Adèle with Mrs. Brindlock, or other proper person, until such time as I am able to come and take her once more under my own protection.

"If you were a more worldly man, my dear Johns, I should hope to win your heartier coöperation in my views by telling you that recent business misfortunes have placed my whole estate in peril, so that it is extremely doubtful if Adèle will have any ultimate money-eyed dependence beyond the pittance which I have placed in trust for her in your hands. Should it be necessary, in furtherance of the objects I have named, to

make communication of the disclosures in this letter to your son or to Miss Johns, you have my full liberty to do so. Farther than this, I trust you may not find it necessary to make known the facts so harmful to the prospects and peace of my innocent child.

"I have thus made a clean breast to you, my dear Johns, and await your scorching condemnation. But let not any portion of it, I pray, be visited upon poor Adèle. I know with what wrathful eyes you, from your New England stand-point, are accustomed to look upon such wickedness; and I know, too, that you are sometimes disposed to 'visit the sins of the fathers upon the children'; but I beg that your anathemas may all rest where they belong, upon my head, and that you will spare the motherless girl you have taught to love you."

Up and down the study the Doctor paced, with a feverish, restless step, which in all the history of the parsonage had never been heard in it before.

"Such untruth!" is his exclamation. "Yet no, there has been no positive untruth; the deception he admits."

But the great fact comes back upon his thought, that the child of sin and shame is with him. All his old distrust and hatred of the French are revived on the instant; the stain of their iniquities is thrust upon his serene and quiet household. And yet what a sweet

face, what a confiding nature God has given to this creature conceived in sin! In his simplicity, the good Doctor would have fancied that some mark of Cain should be fixed on the poor child.

Again, the Doctor had somewhere in his heart a little of the old family pride. The spinster had ministered to it, coyly indeed by word, but always by manner and conduct. How it would have shocked the stout Major, or his good mother, even, to know that he had thus fondled and fostered the vagrant offspring of iniquity upon his hearth! A still larger and worthier pride the Doctor cherished in his own dignity, — so long the honored pastor of Ashfield, — so long the esteemed guide of this people in paths of piety.

What if it should appear, that, during almost the entire period of his holy ministrations, he had, as would seem, colluded with an old acquaintance of his youth — a brazen reprobate — to shield him from the shame of his own misdeeds, and to cover with the mantle of respectability and with all the pastoral dignities this French-speaking child, who, under God, was the seal of the father's iniquities?

As he paced back and forth, there was a timid knock at the door; and in a moment more, Adèle, blooming with health, and radiant with hope, stood before him. Her face had never beamed with a more wondrous frankness and sweetness.

XLIII.

THE foreign letters rarely came singly; and Adèle had already accomplished the reading of her own missive, in which Maverick had spoken of his having taken occasion to address, by the same mail, a line to the Doctor on matters of business, "in regard to which," (he had said,) "don't, my dear Adèle, be too inquisitive, even if you observe that it is cause of some perplexity to the good Doctor. Indeed, in such case, I hope you will contribute to his cheer, as I am sure you have often done. We owe him a large debt of gratitude, my child, and I rely upon you to add your thankfulness to mine, and speak for both."

"You look troubled, New Papa," said Adèle. "Can I help you? Eh, Doctor?"

And she came toward him in her playful manner, and patted the old gentleman on the shoulder, while he sat with his face buried in his hands.

"I don't think papa writes very cheerfully, do you? Eh, — Doctor — Benjamin — Johns?" (tapping him with more spirit.) — "Why, New Papa, what does this mean?"

For the Doctor had raised his head now, and regarded her with a look of mingled yearning and distrust that was wholly new to her.

"Pray, New Papa, what is it?"

The old gentleman — so utterly guileless — was puzzled for an answer; but his ingenuity came to his relief at length.

"No, Adaly, your father does not write cheerfully, — certainly not; he speaks of the probable loss of his fortune."

Now Adèle, with her parsonage training, had really very little idea of fortune.

"That means I won't be rich, New Papa, I suppose. But I don't believe it; he will have money enough, I'm sure. It don't disturb me, New Papa, — not one whit."

The Doctor was so poor a hand at duplicity that he hardly knew what to say, but meantime was keeping his eye with the same dazed look upon the charming Adèle.

"You look so oddly, New Papa, — indeed you do! You have some sermon in your head, now have n't you, that I have broken in upon? — some sermon about — about — let us see."

And she moved toward his desk, where the letter of Maverick still lay unfolded.

The Doctor, lost in thought, did not observe her

movement until she had the letter fairly in her hand; then he seized it with a suddenness of gesture that instantly caught the attention of Adèle.

A swift, deep color ran over her face.

"It is for my eye only, Adaly," said the Doctor, excitedly, folding it and placing it in his pocket.

Adèle, with her curiosity strangely piqued, said, —

"I remember now, papa told me as much."

"What did he tell you, my child?"

"Not to be too curious about some business affairs of which he had written you."

"Ah!" said the Doctor, with a sigh of relief.

"But why should n't I be? Tell me, New Papa," (toying now with the silvered hair upon the forehead of the old gentleman,) "is he really in trouble?"

"No new trouble, my child, — no new trouble."

For a moment Adèle's thought flashed upon that mystery of the mother she had never seen, and an uncontrollable sadness came over her.

"Yet if there be bad news, why should n't I know it?" said she. "I must know it some day."

"'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,'" said the Doctor, gravely. "And if bad news should ever come to you, my dear Adaly, — though I have none to tell you now, — may you have strength to bear it like a Christian!"

"I will! I can!" said she, with a great glow upon her face.

Never more than in that moment had the heart of the old gentleman warmed toward Adèle. Not by any possibility could he make himself the willing instrument of punishing the sin of the father through this trustful and confiding girl. Nay, he felt, as he looked upon her, that he could gladly make of himself a shelter for her against such contempt or neglect as the world might have in store.

When Reuben came presently to summon Adèle to their evening engagement at the Elderkins', the Doctor followed their retreating figures, as they strolled out of the parsonage-gate, with a new and strange interest. Most inscrutable and perplexing was the fact, that this outcast child, whom scarce one in his parish would have been willing to admit to the familiarities of home, — this daughter of infidel France, about whose mind the traditions of the Babylonish harlot had so long lingered, — who had never known motherly counsel or a father's reproof, — that she, with the stain of heathenism upon her skirts, should have grown into the possession of such a holy, placid, and joyous trust. And there was his poor son beside her, the child of so many hopes, reared, as it were, under the very droppings of the altar, still wandering befogged in the mazes of error, if, indeed, he were not in his secret heart a scoffer. Now that

such a result was wholly impracticable and impossible, it did occur to him that perhaps no helpmeet for Reuben could so surely guide him in the way of truth. But of any perplexity of judgment on this score he was now wholly relieved. If his own worldly pride had not stood in the way, (and he was dimly conscious of a weakness of this kind,) the wish of Maverick was authoritative and final. The good man had not the slightest conception of how matters might really stand between the two young parties; he had discovered the anxieties of Miss Eliza in regard to them, and had often queried with himself if too large a taint of worldliness were not coloring the maneuvers of his good sister. For himself he chose rather to leave the formation of all such ties in the hands of Providence, and entertained singularly old-fashioned notions in regard to the sacredness of the marriage-bond and the mystery of its establishment.

In view, however, of possible eventualities, it was necessary that he should come to a full understanding with the spinster in regard to the state of affairs between Adèle and Reuben, and that he should make disclosure to her of the confessions of Maverick. For the second time in his life the Doctor dreaded the necessity of taking his sister into full confidence. The first was on that remarkable occasion — so long past by — when he had declared his youthful love for Rachel,

and feared the opposition which would grow out of the spinster's family pride. Now, as then, he apprehended some violent outbreak. He knew all her positiveness and inflexibility, — an inflexibility with which, fortunately, his convictions of duty rarely, if ever, came in conflict. He therefore respected it very greatly. In all worldly affairs, especially in all that regarded social proprieties, he was accustomed to look upon the opinions of his sister as eminently sound, and to give them full indorsement. Unwittingly the old gentleman had subordinated the whole arrangement of his ceremonious visitings and of his wardrobe to the active and lively suggestions of Miss Eliza. Over and over, when in an absent moment he had slipped from his study for a stroll down the street, the keen eye of the maiden sister had detected him before yet he had passed through the parsonage-gate, and her keen voice came after him, —

"Really, Benjamin, that coat is hardly respectable at this hour on the street. You'll find your new one hanging in the press."

And the Doctor, casting a wary look over his person, as if to protest in favor of an old friend, would go back submissively to comply with the exactions of the precise spinster. A wife could not have been more irritatingly observant of such shortcomings; and it is doubtful if even so godly a man would have yielded to a wife's suggestions with fewer protests.

After due reflection on the letter of Maverick, the Doctor stepped softly to the stairs, and said, —

"Eliza, may I speak with you for a few moments in the study?"

There was something in the parson's tone that promised an important communication; and Miss Johns presently appeared and seated herself, work in hand, over against the parson, at the study-table. Older than when we took occasion to describe her appearance in the earlier portion of this narrative, and — if it could be — more prim and stately. A pair of delicately bowed gold spectacles were now called into requisition by her, for the nicer needle-work on which she specially prided herself. Yet her eye had lost none of its apparent keenness, and, inclining her head slightly, she threw an inquiring glance over her spectacles at the Doctor, who was now as composed as if the startling news of the day had been wholly unheard.

"Eliza," said he, "you have sometimes spoken of the possibility of an attachment between Adaly and our poor Reuben."

"Yes, I have, Benjamin," said the spinster, with an air of confidence that seemed to imply full knowledge of the circumstances.

"Do you see any strong indications of such attachment, Eliza?"

"Well, really, Benjamin," said she, — holding her

needle to the light, and bringing her spectacles to bear upon the somewhat difficult operation (at her age) of threading it, — "really, I think you may leave that matter to my management."

"The letter which I have received to-day from Mr. Maverick alludes to a rumor of such intimacy."

"Really!" — and the lady eyes the Doctor with a look of keen expectation.

"Mr. Maverick," continued the Doctor, "in referring to the matter, speaks of the probable loss of his fortune."

"Is it possible, brother? Loss of his fortune!" And the spinster gives over attention to her work, while she taps with her thimble, reflectively, upon the elbow of her chair. "I don't think, Benjamin," said she, "that Reuben has committed himself in any way."

"That is well, perhaps, Eliza; it is quite as I had supposed."

"And so the poor man's fortune is gone!" continued the spinster plaintively.

"Not gone absolutely, Eliza. Maverick's language is, that his estate is in great peril," returned the Doctor.

"Ah!" The spinster is thoughtful and silent for a while, during which the thimble-finger is also quiet. "Does your friend Maverick speak approvingly of such an attachment, brother?"

"By no means, Eliza; he condemns it in the strongest terms."

Miss Johns is amazed at this revelation; and having taken off her golden-bowed spectacles, she passes them in a nervous way, from end to end, upon the Doctor's table.

"Benjamin," says she presently, with a shrewd look and her sharpest tone, "I don't think his fortune is in any peril whatever. I think Reuben Johns is a good match for Miss Adèle Maverick, any day."

"Tut, tut, Eliza! we must not glorify ourselves vainly. If Maverick disapproves, and Reuben shows no inclination, our course is both plain and easy."

"But I am not so sure about the inclination, Benjamin," said the spinster, sharply; and she replaced her spectacles.

"If that is the case, I am very sorry," said the parson.

The good man had hoped that by only a partial revelation of the contents of the letter he might divert his sister effectually from any matrimonial schemes she might have in hand, and so spare himself the pain of a full disclosure. It was quite evident to him, however, that his plan had miscarried. It was plain that the opposition of Maverick, if unexplained, would only stimulate the spinster to a new zeal in the furtherance of her pet project. There was nothing for it but to lay before her the whole disagreeable truth.

When the Doctor commenced the reading of the letter, Miss Johns resumed her needle-work with a resolute composure that seemed to imply, "The Johns' view of the case has been stated; let us now listen to what Mr. Maverick may have to say."

For a while her fingers plied nimbly; but there came a pause, — an exclamation of amazement, and her work (it was a bit of embroidery for poor Adèle) was dashed upon the floor.

"Benjamin, this is monstrous! The French hussy! Reuben, indeed!"

The Doctor returned composedly to his reading.

"No, brother, I want to hear no more. What a wretch this Maverick must be!"

"A sinner, doubtless, Eliza; yet not a sinner before all others."

The spinster was now striding up and down the room in a state of extraordinary excitement. With a strange inconsequence, she seized the letter from the Doctor's hands, and read it through to the end.

"I am bewildered, Benjamin. To think that the Johns' name should be associated with such shame and guilt!"

"Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased," murmured the Doctor.

But the spinster was in no mood for listening to Scriptural applications.

"And that he should dare to ask us to cloak for him this great scandal!" continued she, wrathfully.

"For the child's sake, Eliza, — for poor Adaly."

"While I am mistress of your household, brother, I shall try to maintain its dignity and respectability. Do you consider, Benjamin, how much these are necessary to your influence?"

"Without doubt, Eliza; yet I cannot perceive how these would suffer by dealing gently with this unfortunate child. A very tender affection for her has grown upon me, Eliza; it would sadden me grievously, if she were to go out from among us bearing unkind thoughts."

"And is your affection strong enough, Benjamin, to make you forget all social proprieties, and the honorable name of our family, and to wish her stay here as the wife of Reuben?"

The Doctor may have winced a little at this; and possibly a touch of worldly pride entered into his reply.

"In this matter, Eliza, I think the wish of Maverick is to be respected."

"Pah! For my part, I respect much more the Johns' name.

As the spinster retired to her room, after being overheated in the discussion, in which the calmness of the Doctor, and the news he had communicated, contributed almost equally to her frenzy, she cast a look, in

passing, upon the bed-chamber of Adèle. There were all the delicate fixtures, in which she had taken such a motherly pride, — the spotless curtains, the cherished vases, and certain toilet adornments, — her gifts, — by each one of which she had hoped to win a point in the accomplishment of her ambitious project. In the flush of her disappointment she could almost have torn down the neatly adjusted drapery, and put to confusion this triumph of her housewifely skill. But cooler thoughts succeeded; and, passing on into her own chamber, she threw herself into her familiar rocking-chair and entered upon a long train of reflections, whose result will very likely have their bearing upon the development of our story.

XLIV.

ABOUT this time, Phil Elderkin had come back from his trip to the West Indies, — not a little bronzed by the fierce suns he had met there, but stalwart as ever, with his old free, frank manner, to which he had superadded a little of that easy confidence and self-poise which come of wide intercourse with the world. All the village greeted him kindly; for there was not a man or a woman in it who bore Phil Elderkin a grudge, — unless it may have been the schoolmaster, who, knowing what a dullard Phil had been at his books, had to bear some measure of the reproach which belonged to his slow progress. But there are some young gentlemen (not, however, so many as dull fellows are apt to think) who ripen best by a reading of the world, instead of books; and Phil Elderkin was eminently one of them. The old Squire took a pride he had never anticipated in walking down the street arm in arm with his stalwart son, (whose support, indeed, the old gentleman was beginning to need,) and in watching the admiring glances of the passers-by, and of such old cronies as stopped to shake hands and

pass a word or two with the Squire's youngest boy. There is this pleasant feature about such quiet, out-of-the-way New England towns, (or was twenty-five years since,) that the old people never forget to feel a pride in the young men, who, having gone out from their borders to try their fortunes, win any measure of success. Of course they are apt to attribute it, with a pleasant vanity, to their own good advice or example; but this by no means detracts from the cordiality of their praises. Phil won all this, — since it was hinted, on the best possible authority, that he had tried certain business chances on his own account in the West Indies, which promised the grandest success.

Even the Doctor had said, "You have reason to be proud of your boy, Squire. I trust that in time he may join piety to prudence."

"Hope he may, hope he may, Doctor," said the Squire. "Fine stout lad, is n't he, Doctor?"

Of course Phil had met early with Reuben, and with the fresh spirit of their old school-days. Phil had very likely been advised of the experiences which had brought Reuben again to Ashfield, and of the questionable result, — for even this had become subject of village gossip; but of such matters there was very coy mention on the part of young Elderkin. Phil's world-knowledge had given him wise hints on this score. And as for Reuben, the encounter with such frank, out-

spoken heartiness and manliness as belonged to his old school-friend was, after his weary mental struggle of the last few months, immensely refreshing.

"Phil, my good fellow, your coming is a great god-send to me. I've been worrying at the theologies here; but it's blind work. I think I shall get back to business again."

"But you have n't made it blind for Adèle, Reuben, — so they tell me."

"And it is true. Faith, Phil, if I could win her beautiful trust I would give my right arm, — indeed, I would."

"But she's not blue," said Phil; "she's as cheery and mirthful as I ever saw her."

"There's the beauty of it," said Reuben. "Many women carry their faith with a face as long and as dull as a sermon. But, by Jove, her face bubbles over with laughter as easily as it ever did."

Sister Rose had, of course, met Phil on his return most gushingly. There is something very beautiful in that warm sisterly affection which at a certain age can put no bounds to its admiring pride. There is a fading away of it as the years progress, and as the sisters drop into little private clamorous circles of their own, and look out upon other people through the spectacles of their husband's eyes, — as they are pretty apt to do; but for a long period following upon the school age it

is very tender and beautiful. If Phil had been coarse, or selfish, or awkward, or ten times the sinner in any way that he was, Rose would most surely have found some charming little excuse for each and every sin, and delighted in reflecting upon him the glow of her own purity.

Of course she insists coyly upon his making the village rounds with her. Those intellectual ladies, the Misses Hapgood, must have an opportunity of admiring his grand air, and the easy manner he has brought back with him of entering a parlor, or of passing the compliments of the day: and, indeed, those respectable old ladies do pay him the honor of keeping him in waiting, until they can arrange their best frontlets, and present themselves in their black silks and in kerchiefs wet with lavender. Little Rose maintains an admiring and eager silence while that rare brother astonishes these good Ashfield ladies with the great splendors of his walk and conversation.

Then with what a bewildering success the traveler, under convoy of the delighted Rose, comes down upon the family of the Tourtelots! What an elaborate toilet Almira matures for his reception! and how the Dame nervously dusts and redusts her bombazine at sight of his grand manner, as she peeps through the half-opened blinds!

The Deacon is not, indeed, so much "taken off

the hooks" by Phil, but entertains him in the old way.

"Pooty well on 't for beef cattle in Cuby, Philip?"

And Rose's eyes glisten, as Brother Philip goes on to set forth some of the wonders of the crops, and the culture.

"Waäl, they 're smart farmers, I 've heerd," says the Deacon; "but we 're makin' improvements here in Ashfield. Doän't know as you 've seen Square Wilkinson's new string o' wall he 's been a-buildin' all the way between his home pastur' and the west medders?"

Phil has not.

"Waäl, it 's wuth seein'. I doän't *know* what they pretend to have in Cuby; but in my opinion, there a'n't such another string o' stone fence, not in the whole caounty!"

And Phil has had his little private talks with Rose, — about Adèle, among other people.

"She is more charming than ever," Rose had said.

"I suppose so."

And there had been a pause here.

"I suppose Reuben is as tender upon her as ever," Phil had said at last, in his off-hand way.

"He has been very devoted; but I 'm not sure that it means any thing, Phil, dear."

"I should think it meant a great deal," said Phil.

"I mean," continued Rose, reflectingly, and with some embarrassment of speech, "I don't think Adèle speaks of Reuben as if — as I should — think" —

"As you would, Rose, — is that it?"

"For shame, Phil!"

And Phil begged pardon with a kiss.

"Do you think, Phil," said Rose, concealing a little fluttering of the heart under very smoothly spoken words, "do you think that Reuben really loves Adèle?"

"Think so? To be sure, Rose. How can he help it? It 's enough for me to see her as I do, odd whiles in our parlor, or walking up and down the garden with you, Rose; if I were to meet her every night and morning, as Reuben must, I should go mad."

"Aha!" said Rose, laughingly; "that 's not the way lovers talk, — at least, not in books. I think you are safe, Phil. And yet" (with a soberer air) "I did think, Phil, one while, that you thought very, very often, and a great deal, of Adèle; and I was not sorry."

"Did you, Rose?" said Phil, eagerly; "did you truly? Then I 'll tell you a secret, Rose, — mind, Rose, a great secret, never to be lisped, — not to mother even. I did love Adèle as far back as I can remember. You know the strange little French hat she used to wear? Well, I used to draw it on my slate at school, Rose; it was all I could draw that belonged

to her. Many 's the time, when, if a boy came near, I would dash in some little flourishes about it, and call it a basket or a coal-scoop; but all the while, for me, her little dark eyes were shining under it. But there was Reuben, — I told him I thought Suke Boody the prettiest girl in Ashfield, but it was n't true, — and he beat me in reading and writing, and every thing, I think, but fisticuffs."

"Did he?" said Rose, with the prettily arched brow which mostly accompanied only her mischievous sallies; and it seemed to Phil afterwards that she would have resented the statement, if he had made it concerning any other young fellow in Ashfield.

"Yes, indeed," continued he. "I knew he must beat me out and out with Adèle. Do you remember, Rose, how you told me once that he had sent a gift of furs to her? Well, Rose, I had my own little gift hidden away for her for that same New-Year's Day, and I burned it. Those furs kept me awake an awful time. And when I went away, Rose, I prayed that I might learn to forget her; but there was never a letter of yours that came with her name in it, (and most of them had it, you know,) but I saw her as plainly as ever, with her arm laced in yours, as I used to see you many a time from my window, strolling down the garden. And now that I have come back, Rose, it 's the same confounded thing. By Jove, I feel as if I

could pitch into Reuben, as I used to do at school. But then he 's a good fellow, and a good friend of mine, I 'm sure."

"I 'm sure he is," said Rose. "But, Phil," continued she, meditatively, "it seems to me, if I were a man, and loved a woman as you love Adèle, I should find some way of letting her know it."

"Would you, Rosy? Do you think there 's a ghost of a chance?"

"I don't know, Phil: Adèle is not one who talks of such things."

"Nor you, I think, Rose."

"Of course not, Phil." And after a little hesitation, "Of whom should I talk, pray?"

Now it happened that this private conversation took place upon the same day on which had transpired the interview we have already chronicled between the Doctor and Miss Johns. Reuben and Adèle were to pass the evening at the Elderkins'. Adèle was not of a temper to be greatly disturbed by the rumor at which the Doctor had hinted of a lost fortune. (We write, it must be remembered, of a time nearly thirty years gone by.) Indeed, as she tripped along beside Reuben, it seemed to him that she had never been in a more jocular and vivacious humor. A reason for this (and it is what, possibly, many of our readers may count a very unnatural one) lay in the letter which

she had that day received from her father, in which Maverick, in alluding to a possible *affaire du cœur* in connection with Reuben, had counseled her, with great earnestness, to hold her affections in reserve, and, above all, to control most rigidly any fancy which she might entertain for the son of their friend the Doctor.

It amused Adèle; for Reuben had been so totally undemonstrative in matters of sentiment, (possibly keeping his deeper feelings in reserve,) that Adèle had felt over and over a girl's mischievous propensity to provoke it. Not that she was in any sense heartless; not that she did not esteem him, and feel a keen sense of gratitude; but his kindest and largest favors were always attended with such demureness and reticence of manner as piqued her womanly vanity. For these reasons there was something exhilarating to her in the intimation conveyed by Maverick's letters, that she was the party, after all, upon whose decision must rest the peace of mind of the two, and that she must cultivate the virtue of treating him with coolness.

Possibly it would have been an easy virtue to cultivate, even though Reuben's attentions had shown the warmth which the blood of nineteen feminine years craves in a lover; but as the matter stood, there was something amusing to her in Maverick's injunction. As if there were any danger! As if there could be!

Should it grow serious some day, it would be time enough then to consider her good papa's injunction; very possibly she would pay the utmost heed to it, since a respect for Mr. Maverick's opinions and advice was almost a part of Adèle's religion.

XLV.

WE left Miss Eliza Johns in her chamber, swaying back and forth in her rocking-chair, and resolutely confronting the dire news which the Doctor had communicated. What was to be done? Never had so serious a problem been presented to her for solution. There were both worldly and religious motives, as the spinster reckoned them, for plucking out of her heart all the growing tenderness which she had begun to feel toward Adèle; and the sudden discomfiture of that engaging, ambitious scheme which she had fondled so long prompted a feeling of resentment which was even worse than worldly.

How would you have treated the matter, Madam? Would your Christian charities have shrunk from the ordeal? But whatever might have been the other sins of the spinster, there was in her no disposition to shrink from the conclusions to which her logic of propriety and respectability might lead. Adèle was to be discarded, but not suddenly. All her art must be employed to disabuse Reuben of any lingering tenderness. The Doctor's old prejudice against French

blood must be worked to its utmost. But there must be no violent clamor, — above all, no disclosure of the humiliating truth. Maverick (the false man !) must be instructed that it would be agreeable to the Johns family — nay, that their sense of dignity demanded — that he should reclaim his child at an early day. On this last score, it might be necessary, indeed, to practice very adroit management with the Doctor; but for the rest, she had the amplest confidence in her own activity and discretion.

She was not the woman to sleep upon her plans, when once they were decided on; and she had no sooner forecast her programme than she took advantage of the lingering twilight to arrange her toilet for a call upon the Elderkins. Of course she led off the Doctor in her trail. The spinster's "marching orders," as he jocularly termed them, the good man was as incapable of resisting as if he had been twenty years a husband.

In a few swift words she unfolded her design.

"And now, Benjamin, don't, pray, let your sentiment get the better of you, in regard to this French girl. Think of the proprieties in the case, Benjamin, — the proprieties," — which she enforced by a little shake of her forefinger.

Whenever it came to a question of the "proprieties," the Doctor was conscious of his weakness. What, in-

deed, could the poor man know about the proprieties, as set forth by Miss Johns, that he should presume to argue against them? What, indeed, can any man do, when a woman bases herself on the "proprieties"?

It was summer weather, and the windows of the hospitable Elderkin mansion were wide open. As the Doctor and spinster drew near, little gusts of cheery music came out to greet their ears. For, at this time, Miss Almira had her rival pianos about the village; and the pretty Rose had been taught a deft way of touching the "first-class" instrument, which the kind-hearted Squire had bestowed upon her. And, if it must be told, little sparkling waltzes had from time to time waked the parlor solitude, and the kind Mistress Elderkin had winked at little furtive parlor-dances on the part of Rose and Adèle, — they had so charmed the old Squire, and set all his blood (as he said, with a gallant kiss upon the brow of Mrs. Elderkin) flowing in the old school-boy currents. Now it happened upon this very evening, that the Squire, though past seventy now, was in the humor to see a good old-fashioned frolic, and, Rose rattling off some crazy waltz, Phil, at a hint from the old gentleman, had taken possession of Adèle, and was showing off with a good deal of grace, and more spirit, the dancing-steps of which he had had experience with the Spanish señoritas.

Dame Tourtelot, who chanced to be present, wore a

long face, which (it is conceivable) the hearty old Squire enjoyed as much as the dancing. But Mrs. Elderkin must have looked with a warm maternal pride upon the fine athletic figure of her boy, as he went twirling down the floor, with that graceful figure of Adèle.

Upon the very midst of it, however, the Doctor and Miss Johns came like a cloud. The fingers of Rose rested idly on the keys. Adèle, who was gay beyond her wont, alone of all the company could not give over her light-heartedness on the instant: so she makes away to greet the Doctor, — Miss Johns standing horrified.

"New Papa, you have surprised us. Phil was showing me some new steps. Do you think it very, very wrong?"

"Adaly! Adaly!"

"Ah, you dear old man, it is n't wrong; — say it is n't wrong."

By this time the Squire has come forward.

"Ah, Doctor, young folks will be young folks; but I think you won't have a quarrel with Mrs. Elderkin yonder. My dear," (addressing Mrs. Elderkin,) "you must set this matter right with the Doctor. We must keep our young people in his good books."

"The good books are not kept by me, Squire," said the parson.

Reuben, who had been loitering about Rose, and who, to do him justice, had seen Phil's gallant attention to Adèle without one spark of jealousy, was specially interested in this interruption of the festivities. In his present state of mind, he was most eager to know how far the evening's hilarity would be imputed as a sin to the new convert, and how far religious severities (if she met any) would control the ardor of Adèle. The Doctor's face softened, even while he talked with the charming errant, — Reuben observed that; but with Aunt Eliza the case was different. Never had he seen such a threatening darkness in her face.

"We have interrupted a ball, I fear," she said to the hostess, in a tone which was as virulent as a masculine oath.

"Oh! no! no!" said Mrs. Elderkin. "Indeed, now, you must not scold Adèle too much; 't was only a bit of the Squire's foolery."

"Oh, certainly not; she is quite her own mistress. I should be very sorry to consider myself responsible for all her tastes."

Reuben, hearing this, felt his heart leap toward Adèle in a way which the spinster's praises had never provoked.

Dame Tourtelot here says, in her most aggravating manner, —

"I think she dances beautiful, Miss Johns. She dooz yer credit, upon my word she dooz."

And thereupon there followed a somewhat lively altercation between those two sedate ladies, — in the course of which a good deal of stinging mockery was covered with unctuous compliment. But the spinster did not lose sight of her chief aim, to wit, the refusal of all responsibility as attaching to the conduct of Adèle, and a most decided intimation that the rumors which associated her name with Reuben were unfounded, and were likely to prove altogether false.

This last hint was a revelation to the gossiping Dame; there had been trouble, then, at the parsonage; things were clearly not upon their old footing. Was it Adèle? Was it Reuben? Yet never had either shown greater cheer than on this very night. But the Dame none the less eagerly had communicated her story, before the evening closed, to Mrs. Elderkin, — who received it doubtingly, — to Rose, who heard it with wonder and a pretty confusion, — and to the old Squire, who said only, "Pooh! pooh! it's a lover's quarrel; we shall be all straight to-morrow."

Adèle, by her own choice, was convoyed home, when the evening was over, by the good Doctor, and had not only teased him into pardon of her wild mirth, before they had reached the parsonage-gate, but had kindled in him a glow of tenderness that made him utterly forgetful of the terrible news of the day. Reuben and

the spinster, as they followed, talked of Rose; never had Aunt Eliza spoken so warmly of her charms; but before him was tripping along, in the moonlight, the graceful figure of Adèle, clinging to the old gentleman's arm, and it is doubtful if his eye did not feast more upon that vision than his ear upon the new praises of the spinster.

Yet, for all that, Rose was really charming. The young gentleman, it would seem, hardly knew his own heart; and he had a wondrous dream that night. There was a church, (such as he had seen in the city,) and a delicately gloved hand, which lay nestling in his; and Mr. Maverick, oddly enough, appeared to give away a bride, and all waited only for the ceremony, which the Doctor (with his old white hat and cane) refused to perform; whereat Phil's voice was heard bursting out in a great laugh; and the face of Rose, too, appeared; but it was only as a saint upon a painted window. And yet the face of the saint upon the window was more distinct than any thing in his dream.

The next morning found Miss Eliza harsh and cold. Even the constrained smile with which she had been used to qualify her "good-morning" for Adèle was wanting; and when the family prayers were said, in which the good Doctor had pleaded, with unction, that the Christian grace of charity might reign in all hearts,

the poor girl had sidled up to Miss Eliza, and put her hand in the spinster's, —

"You think our little frolic last night to be very wrong, I dare say?"

"Oh, no," said the spinster. "I dare say Mr. Maverick and your French relatives would approve."

It was not so much the language as the tone which smote on poor Adèle, and brought the tears welling into her eyes.

Reuben, seeing it all, and forgetful of the good parson's plea, gnawed his lip to keep back certain very harsh utterances.

"Don't think of it, Ady," said he, watching his chance a little later; "the old lady is in one of her blue moods to-day."

"Do you think I did wrong, Reuben?" said Adèle, earnestly.

"I? Wrong, Adèle? Pray, what should I have to say about the right or wrong? and I think the old ladies are beginning to think I have no clear idea of the difference between them."

"You have, Reuben! you have! And, Reuben," (more tenderly,) "I have promised solemnly to live as you thought a little while ago that you would live. And if I were to break my promise, Reuben, I know that you would never renew yours."

"I believe you are speaking God's truth, Adèle," said he.

The summer months passed by, and for Adèle the little table at the parsonage had become as bleak and cheerless as the autumn. Miss Johns maintained the rigid severity of manner, with which she had undertaken to treat the outcast child, with a constancy that would have done credit to a worthier intent. Even the good Doctor was unconsciously oppressed by it, and by the spinster's insistence upon the due proprieties was weaned away from his old tenderness of speech; but every morning and every evening his voice trembled with emotion as he prayed for God's grace and mercy to descend upon all sinners and outcasts.

He had written to Maverick, advising him of the great grief which his confession had caused him, and imploring him to make what reparation he yet might do, by uniting in the holy bonds of matrimony with the erring mother of his child. He had further advised him that his apprehensions with regard to Reuben were, so far as was known, groundless. He further wrote, — "Upon consultation with Miss Johns, who is still at the head of our little household, I am constrained to ask that you take as early a time as may be convenient to relieve her of the further care of your daughter. Age is beginning to tell somewhat upon my sister; and the embarrassment of her position with respect to Adèle is a source, I believe, of great mental distress."

All which the good Doctor honestly believed, — upon

Miss Eliza's averment, — and in his own honest way he assured his friend, that, though his sins were as scarlet, he should still implore Heaven in his favor, and should part from Adèle — whenever the parting might come — with real grief, and with an outpouring of his heart.

As for Reuben, a wanton levity had come over him in those latter days of summer that galled the poor Doctor to the quick, and that strangely perplexed the observant spinster. It was not the mischievous spirit of his boyhood revived again, but a cold, passionless, determined levity, such as men wear who have secret griefs to conceal. He talked in a free and easy way about the Doctor's Sunday discourses, that fairly shocked the old people of the parish; rumor said that he had passed some unhallowed jokes with the stolid Deacon Tourtelot about his official duties; and it was further reported that he had talked open infidelity with a young physician who had recently established himself in Ashfield, and who plumed himself — until his tardy practice taught him better — upon certain arrogant physiological notions with regard to death and disease that were quite unbiblical. Long ago the Doctor had given over open expostulation; every such talk seemed to evoke a new and more airy and more adventurous demon in the backslidden Reuben. The good man half feared to cast his eye over the books he might be reading. If it were Voltaire, if it were Hume, he

feared lest his rebuke and anathema should give a more appetizing zest.

But he prayed — ah, how he prayed! with the dead Rachel in his thought — as if (and this surely cannot be Popishly wicked) — as if she, too, in some sphere far remote, might with angel voice add tender entreaty to the prayer, whose burden, morning after morning and night after night, was the name and the hope of her boy.

And Adèle? Well, Reuben pitied Adèle, — pitied her subjection to the iron frowns of Miss Eliza; and almost the only earnest words he spoke in those days were little quiet words of good cheer for the French girl. And when Miss Eliza whispered him, as she did, that the poor child's fortune was gone, and her future insecure, Reuben, with a brave sort of antagonism, made his words of cheer and good-feeling even more frequent than ever. But about his passing and kindly attentions to Adèle there was that air of gay mockery which overlaid his whole life, and which neither invited nor admitted of any profound acknowledgment. His kindest words — and some of them, so far as mere language went, were exuberantly tender — were met always by a half-saddened air of thankfulness and a little restrained pressure of the hand, as if Adèle had said, — "Not in earnest yet, Reuben! Earnest in nothing!"

XLVI.

IT would have been strange, if Adèle had not some day formed her ideal of a lover. What young girl, indeed, does not? Who cannot recall the sweet illusions of those tripping youthful years, when, for the first time, Sir William Wallace strode so gallantly with waving plume and glittering falchion down the pages of Miss Porter, — when sweet Helen Mar wasted herself in love for the hero, — when the sun-browned Ivanhoe dashed so grandly into that famous tilting-ground near to Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and brought the wicked Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert to a reckoning, — when we wished the disinherited knight better things than the cold love of the passionless Rowena, and sighed over the fate of poor Fergus MacIvor? With all these characters, and many other such, Adèle had made acquaintance, in company with her dear Rose, and by the light of them, they had fashioned such ideals in their little heads as do not often appear in the flesh. Not that the two friends always agreed in their dreamy fancies; but for either, a hero must have

been handsome and brave and true and kind and sagacious and learned. If only a few hundred of men should be patterned after the design of a young girl of sixteen or eighteen, what an absurd figure we old sinners should cut in the comparison! Yet it is pleasant to reflect that thousands of fresh young hearts do go on, year after year, conceiving of wonderful excellences as pertaining to the baser sex; and the knowledge of the fact should, it would seem, give a little more of animation to our struggles against the deviltries and brutalities of the world.

But the ideal of our friend Adèle had not been constant. Three years back, the open, frank, brave front which Phil Elderkin wore had almost reached it; and when Rose had said, — as she was wont to say, in her sisterly pride, — "He 's a noble fellow," there had been a little tingling of the heart in Adèle, which seemed to echo the words. Afterward had come that little glimpse of the world which her journey and intercourse with Maverick had afforded; and the country awkwardness of the Elderkins had somehow worked an eclipse of his virtues. Reuben, indeed, had comeliness, and had caught at that time some of the graces of the city; but Reuben was a *tease*, and failed in a certain quality of respect for her, (at least, she fancied it,) in default of which she met all his favors with a sisterly tenderness, in which there

was none of the reserve that tempts passion to declare itself.

Later, when Reuben so opened the way to her belief, and associated himself so intimately with the culmination of her religious faith, he seemed to her for a time the very impersonation of her girlish fancy, — so tender, so true, so trustful. Her religious enthusiasm blended with and warmed her sentiment; and never had she known such hours of calm enjoyment, or such hopeful forecast of her worldly future, as in those golden days when the hearts of both were glowing (or seemed to be) with a common love. It was not that this sentiment in her took any open form of expression; her instinctive delicacy so kept it under control that she was but half conscious of its existence. But it was none the less true that the sad young pilgrim, who had been a brother, and who had unlocked for her the Beautiful Gate, wore a new aspect. Her heart was full of those glittering estimates of life, which come at rare intervals, in which duties and affections all seem in delightful accord, working each their task, and glowing through all the reach of years, until the glow is absorbed in the greater light which shines upon Christian graves. But Reuben's desertion from the faith broke this phantasm. Her faith, standing higher, never shook; but the sentiment which grew under its cover found nothing positive whereby to cling,

and perished with the shock. Besides which, her father's injunction came to the support of her religious convictions, and made her disposition to shake off that empty fancy tenfold strong. Had Reuben, in those days of his exaltation, made declaration of his attachment, it would have met with a response that could have admitted of no withdrawal, and her heart would have been leashed to his, whatever outlawry might threaten him. She thanked Heaven that it had not been thus. Her ideal was still unstained and unbroken; but it no longer found its type in the backsliding Reuben. It is doubtful, indeed, if her sentiment at this period, by mere force of rebound, and encouraged by her native charities and old proclivities, did not rally about young Elderkin, who had equipped himself with many accomplishments of the world, and who, if he made no pretensions to the faith she had embraced, manifested an habitual respect that challenged her gratitude.

As for Reuben, after his enthusiasm of the summer had vanished, he felt a prodigious mortification in reflecting that Adèle had been so closely the witness of his short-lived hallucination. It humiliated him bitterly to think that all his religious zeal had proved in her regard but the empty crackling of a fire of thorns. No matter what may be a youth's sentiment for girlhood, he never likes it to be witness of any thing dis-

paraging to his sturdy resolution and manly purpose. But Adèle had seen him shake like a reed under the deepest emotions that could give tone to character; and in his mortification at the thought, he transferred to her a share of the resentment he felt against himself. It was a relief to treat her with a dignified coolness, and to meet all her tender inquiries, which she did not forbear, with an icy assurance of manner that was more than half affected, — yet not unkind, but assiduously and intensely and provokingly civil.

Seeing this, the Doctor and Miss Eliza had given over any fear of a possibly dangerous interest on the part of Reuben; and yet keen observers might well have scented a danger in this very studied indifference, if they reflected that its motive lay exclusively in a mortified pride. We are not careful to conceal our mortifications from those whose regard we rate humbly.

At any rate, it happened, that, with the coming of the autumn months, Reuben, still floating drearily on a sea of religious speculation, and veering more and more into open mockery of the beliefs of all about him, grew weary of his affectations with respect to Adèle. He fretted under the kindly manner with which she met his august civilities. They did not wound her sensibilities, as he hoped they might have done. Either this disappointment or the need of relief provoked a change of tactics. With a sudden zeal that

was half earnest and half a freak of vanity, he devoted himself to Adèle. The father's sympathy with him was just now dead; that of the aunt had never been kindled to such a degree as to meet his craving; with the Elderkins he was reluctant to unfold his opinions so far as to demand sympathy. As for Adèle, if he could light up again the sentiment which he once saw beaming in her face, he could at least find in it a charming beguilement of his unrest. She had a passion for flowers: every day he gathered for her some floral gift; every day she thanked him with a kindness that meant only kindness. She had a passion for poetry: every day he read to her such as he knew she must admire; every day she thanked him with a warmth upon which he could build no hopes.

Both the Doctor and Miss Eliza were disturbed by this new zeal of his. At the instance of the spinster, the Doctor undertook to lay before Reuben the information conveyed in the letter of Maverick, and that gentleman's disapproval of any association between the young people looking to marriage. It was not an easy or an agreeable task for the Doctor; and he went about it in a very halting manner.

"Your Aunt Eliza has observed, Reuben, that you have lately become more pointed in your attentions to Adaly."

"I dare say, father; worries her, does n't it?"

"We do not know how far these attentions may be serious, Reuben."

"Nor I, father."

The Doctor was shocked at this new evidence of his son's indifference to any fixed rule of conduct.

"How long is it, father," continued Reuben, "since Aunt Eliza has commenced her plottings against Adèle?"

"Not plottings against her, I trust, Reuben."

"Yes, she has, father. She 's badgering her in her quiet way incessantly, — as far back as when she caught sight of her in that dance at the Elderkins'. For my part, I think it was a charming thing to see."

"We have graver reasons for our anxiety in regard to your relations with her, my son; and not the least of them is Mr. Maverick's entire disapproval of any such attachment."

And thereupon the Doctor had proceeded to lay before Reuben (who now showed a most lively interest) a full revelation of the facts announced in Maverick's letter.

The son had a strong smack of the father's family pride, and the strange news was bewildering to him; but in his present stage of distrust, he felt a strong disposition to protest against all the respectable conventionalities that hedged him in. A generous instinct in him, too, as he thought of the poor girl under the

ban of the towns folk, craved some chivalric expression; and whatever sentiment he may really have entertained for her in past days took new force in view of the sudden barriers that rose between him and the tender, graceful, confiding, charming Adèle, whose image had so long and (as he now thought) so constantly dwelt in the dreamy mirage of his future. Under the spur of these feelings, he presently gave over his excited walk up and down the study, and, coming close to the Doctor, whispered, with a grave earnestness that made the old gentleman recognize a man in his boy, —

"Father, I have doubted my own feelings about Adèle: now I do not. I love her; I love her madly. I shall protect her; if she will marry me," (and he touched the Doctor on the shoulder with a quick, nervous tap of his hand,) "I shall marry her, — God bless her!"

And Reuben, by the very speech, as well as by the thoughts that had gone before, had worked himself into a passion of devotion.

"Be careful, my son," said the old gentleman; "remember how your enthusiasm has betrayed you in a still more serious matter."

Reuben smiled bitterly.

"Don't reproach me with that, father. It seems to me that I am acting now more on the side of the Christian charities than either you or Aunt Eliza."

And with this he strode out, leaving the Doctor in an agony of apprehension.

A moment after, Miss Eliza, who was ever on the alert, and without whose knowledge a swallow could not dart into the chimneys of the parsonage, came rustling into the study.

"Well, Benjamin, what does Reuben say?"

"Given over to his idols, Eliza, — given over to his idols. We can only pray God to have him in His holy keeping."

It would be impossible to fathom all the emotions of Reuben during that interview with his father. It would be wrong to say that the view of future marriage had not often held up its brilliant illusions before him; it would be wrong to say that they had never been associated with the charming vivacity of Adèle, as well as, at other times, with the sweet graces of Rose Elderkin. But these illusions had been of a character so transitory, so fleeting, that he had come to love their brilliant changes, and to look forward with some dread to the possible permanence of them, or such fixedness as should take away the charming drift of his vagaries. If, in some wanton and quite impossible moment, the modest Rose had conquered her delicacy so far as to put her hand in his, and say, "Will you be my husband?" he would not have been so much outraged by her boldness as disturbed by the reflection that a

pleasant little dream of love was broken up, and that his thought must come to that practical solution of a *yes* or *no* which would make an end of his delightful doubts and yearnings. The positive and the known are, after all, so much less, under imaginative measure, than the uncertain and the dreamy!

And if he could have taken the spinster's old tales of Adèle's regard for him and devotion to him at their highest truth, (which he never did, because of the girl's provoking familiarity and indifference,) he would have felt a great charm in his life cut off. Yet now he wanders in search of her with his heart upon his lip and a great fire in his brain. Not a little pride in affronting opinion may have kindled the glow of his sudden resolve. There was an audacity in it that tempted and regaled him. Why should he, whose beliefs were so uncertain, who had grown into doubts of that faith on which all the conventional proprieties about him reposed, — why should he not discard them, and obey a single, strong, generous instinct? When a man's religious sensibilities suffer recoil as Reuben's had done, there grows up a new pride in the natural emotions of generosity; the humane instincts show exceptional force; the skeptics become the teachers of an exaggerated philanthropy.

Did he love her beyond all others? Yesterday he could not have told; to-day, under the fervor of his au-

dacity and of his pride, his love blazes up in a fiery flame. It seethes around the memory of her lithe, graceful figure in a whirl of passion. Those ripe red lips shall taste the burning heat of his love and tenderness. He will guard, cherish, protect, and the iron aunt may protest, or the world talk as it will. "Adèle!" Adèle!" His heart is full of the utterance, and his step wild with tumultuous feeling, as he rushes away to find her, — to win her, — to bind together their destinies forever!

XLVII.

IT was a mellow evening of later October. Mists hung in all the hollows of the hills. Within the orchard, where Adèle was strolling, a few golden apples still shone among the bronzed leaves. She saw Reuben coming swiftly through the garden; but his eager step faltered as he came near her. Even the serene look of girlhood has a power in it to make impassioned confidence waver, and enthusiasms suffer recoil. He meets her at last with an assumption of his every-day manner, which she cannot but see presently is underlaid with a tempest of struggling feeling to which he is a stranger. He has taken her hand and placed it in his arm, — a little coquettish device to which he was wont; but he keeps the little hand in his with a nervous clasp that is new, and that makes her tremble all the more when his speech grows impassioned, and the easy compliments of his past days of frolicsome humor take a depth of tone which make her heart thrill strangely. Meantime, they had come to the garden-end of the walk.

"It 's late, Reuben, and I must go in-doors," said she, with a quiet that she did not feel.

"We'll take one more turn, Adèle; you *must*." And her hand trembled in the eager clasp he fastened upon it.

Not once did it come into her mind that Reuben was to make a declaration of passion for her. She had feared only some burst of feeling in the direction of the spinster, or of the Doctor, which should compromise him even more seriously. When, therefore, he burst forth, as he did presently, with a passionate avowal of his love, she was overwhelmed with confusion.

"This is so sudden, so strange, Reuben! indeed it is!"

Tenderly as she may have felt toward him in days gone, and gratefully as she always felt, this sudden attempt to carry by storm the very citadel of her affections was not alone a surprise, but seemed like sacrilege. The mystery and doubt that overhung the relations between her own father and mother — and which she felt keenly — had made her regard with awe any possible marriage of her own, investing the thought of it with a terrible sanctity, and as something to be approached only with a reverent fear. If in this connection she had ever thought of Reuben, it was in those days when he seemed so earnest in the faith, and when their feelings were blent by some superhuman agency. But at his divergence into the paths of skepticism, it seemed to her simple and intense faith that thenceforth

their pilgrimages must be wholly distinct: his — and she trembled at the thought of it — through some terrible maze of error, where she could not follow; and hers — by God's grace — straight to the city whose gates are of pearl.

When, therefore, she had replied to the passionate address of Reuben, "You must not talk thus," it was with a tear in her eye.

"It grieves you, then, Adèle?"

"Yes, it grieves me, Reuben. Our paths are different now;" and she bethought herself of her father's injunction, which seemed to make her duty still plainer, and forbade her to encourage that parley with her heart which — with her hand still fast in Reuben's, and his eyes beaming with a fierce heat upon her — she was beginning to entertain.

"Adèle, tell me, can I go on?"

"Indeed, indeed, you must not, Reuben!" — and withdrawing her hand suddenly, she passed it over brow and eyes, as if to rally her thoughts to measure the situation.

"You are weeping, Adèle?" said Reuben.

"No, not weeping," said she, dashing the merest film of mist from her eyes, "but so troubled! — so troubled!" And she looked yearningly, but vainly, in his face for that illumination which had belonged to his enthusiasm of the summer.

They walked for a moment in silence, — he, with a scowl upon his face. Seeing this, Adèle said, plaintively, —

"It seems to me, Reuben, as if this might be only a solemn mockery of yours."

"You doubt me, then?" returned he like a flash.

"Do you not doubt yourself, Reuben? Have you never doubted yourself?" This with a glance that pierced him through.

"Good Heavens! are you turned preacher?" said he, bitterly. "Will you measure a heart by its dogmatic beliefs?"

"For shame, Reuben!"

And for a time both were silent. At last Adèle spoke again, —

"There is a sense of coming trouble that oppresses me strangely, — that tells me I must not listen to you, Reuben."

"I know it, Adèle; and it is for this I would cherish you, and protect you against all possible shame or indignities" —

"Shame! Indignities! What does this mean? What do you know, Reuben?"

Reuben blushed scarlet. His speech had outrun his discretion; but seizing her hand, and pressing it more tenderly than ever, he said, —

"Only this, Adèle: I see that a coolness has grown

up toward you in the parsonage; the old prejudice against French blood may revive again; besides which, there is, you know, Adèle, that little family cloud" —

"Is this the old, kind Reuben, — my brother, — who reminds me of a trouble so shadowy I cannot fairly measure it?" And Adèle covered her face with her hands.

"Forgive me, Adèle, for God's sake!"

"There *is* a cloud, Reuben; thank you for the word," said Adèle, recovering herself; "and there is, I fear, an even darker cloud upon your faith. Until both are passed, I can never listen to such talk as you would urge upon me, — never! never!"

And there was a spirit in her words now that awed Reuben.

"Would you impute my unbelief to me as a crime, Adèle? is this your Christian charity? Do you think that I enjoy this fierce wrestling with doubts? or, having them, would you bid me play false and conceal them? What if I am a final castaway, as your good books tell us some must be, would you make me a castaway before my time, and balk all my hopes in life? Is this your charity?"

"I would not, — you know I would not, Reuben."

"Listen to me, Adèle. If there be any hope of making my way out of this weary wrangle, it seems to me that it would be in the constant presence of your

simple, exultant faith. Will you be my teacher, Adèle?"

"Teacher, — yes, with all my heart, Reuben."

"Then be mine," said he, seizing her hand again, "from this very hour!"

An instant she seemed to waver; then came over her the memory of her father's injunction, — the mystery, too, that overshadowed her own life.

"I cannot, — I cannot, Reuben!"

"Is this final?" said he, calmly.

"Final."

She sighed it rather than spoke aloud; the next instant she had slipped away through the shrubbery, with a swift, cruel rustle of her silken dress, toward the parsonage.

Reuben lingered in the orchard until he saw the light flashing through the muslin hangings of her window. She had gone early to her chamber. She had kissed the crucifix that was her mother's with a fervor that sprang as much from devotion as from sentiment. She had sobbed out her prayer, and with sobs had buried her sweet face in the pillow.

Could Reuben have seen or conceived all this, he might have acted differently.

As it was, he entered the Doctor's study an hour later, with the utmost apparent coolness.

"Well, father," said he, "I have offered marriage

to your motherless and pious French *protégée*, and she declines."

"My poor son!" said the Doctor.

But his sympathy was not so much with any possible feeling of disappointment as with the chilling heartlessness and unbelief that seemed to boast themselves in his speech.

"It will be rather dull in Ashfield now, I fancy," continued Reuben, "and I shall slip off to New York tomorrow and take a new taste of the world."

And the Doctor (as if to himself) said despairingly, "'*Whom He will He hardeneth.*'"

"But, father," said Reuben, (without notice of the old gentleman's ejaculation,) "don't let Aunt Eliza know of this, — not a word, or she will be fearfully cruel to the poor child."

There was a grave household in the parsonage next morning. Reuben rebelled in heart, in face, and in action against the tediously long prayer of the parson, though the old gentleman's spirit was writhing painfully in his pleadings. The aunt was more pious and austere than ever. Adèle, timid and shrinking, yet with a beautiful and a trustful illumination in her eye, that for days, and weeks, and months, lingered in the memory of the parson's son.

Later in the day Reuben went to make his adieus to the Elderkins. The old Squire was seated in his door

busied with the "Weekly Courant," which had just come in.

"Aha, Master Reuben," (this was his old-fashioned way,) "you're looking for that lazy fellow, Phil, I suppose. You 'll find him up-stairs with his cigar and his Spanish, I 'll venture."

Reuben made his way up to Phil's chamber after the unceremonious manner to which he has been used in that hospitable home, while a snatch of a little songlet from Rose came floating after him along the stairs. It was very sweet. But what were sweet songlets to him now? It being a mild autumn day, Phil sat at the open window, from which he had many a time seen the old Doctor jogging past in his chaise, and sometimes the tall Almira picking her maidenly way along the walk with her green parasol daintily held aloft with thumb and two fingers, while from the lesser fingers dangled a little embroidered bag which was the wonder of all the school-girls. Other times, too, from this eyrie of his, he had seen Adèle tripping past, with Reuben beside her, and had wondered what their chat might be, while he had feasted his eyes upon her fair figure.

Yet Phil was by no means an idler; he had developed a great business shrewdness, and two or three times in the week drove over to a neighboring river-town to look after the shipments to the West Indies in

which he was now interested in company with the Squire. But this had not forbidden a little cursory reading of a sentimental kind. There may have been a stray volume of Pelham upon his table, and a six-volume set of Byron in green and gold upon his limited book-shelf, (both of which were strongly disapproved of by Mrs. Elderkin, but tolerated by the Squire,) — besides which, there were certain Spanish ballads to which he had taken a great fancy since his late visit to Cuba.

Reuben was always a welcome visitor, and was presently in full flow of talk, and puffing nervously at one of Phil's choice Havanas (which in that day were true to their titles).

"I'm off, Phil," said Reuben at last, breaking in upon his host's ecstasy over a ballad he had been reciting, with what he counted the true Castilian magniloquence.

"Off where?" said Phil.

"Off for the city. I'm weary of this do-nothing life, — weary of the town, weary of the good people."

"There's nothing you care for, then, in Ashfield?' said Phil. And at that moment a little burst of the singing of Rose came floating up the stair, — so sweet! so sweet!

"Care for? Yes," said Reuben, "but they are all so good! so devilish good!" — and he puffed at his cigar

with a nervous violence. It was not often that such an approach to profanity sullied the lips of Reuben, and Phil noted it with surprise.

"I thought there would have been at least one magnet that would have kept you here," said Phil.

"What magnet, pray?" says Reuben, — somewhat calm again.

"There she goes," says Phil, looking out of the window. And at the moment Adèle tripped by, with the old Doctor walking gravely at her side.

"Humph!" said Reuben, with a composure that was feigned, "she 's too much of a Puritan for me, Phil: or rather, I 'm too little of a Puritan for her."

Philip looked at his companion keenly. And Reuben, looking back at him as keenly, said, after a silence of a few moments, —

"I don't think you 'll ever marry her either, Phil."

"Marry!" said Phil, with a deep, honest blush, — "who talks of that?"

"You, in your heart, Phil. Do you think I am blind? Do you think I have not seen that you have loved her, Phil, ever since you knew what it was to love a woman? Do you think, that, as a boy, you ever imposed upon me with your talk about that handsome Suke Boody, the tavern-keeper's daughter? Good Heavens! Phil, I think there were never two men in the world who talked their thoughts plainly to each

other! Do you think I do not know that you have played the shy lover, because with your big heart you have yielded to what you counted a prior claim of mine, — because Adèle was one of us at the parsonage?"

"In such affairs," said Phil, with some constraint and not a little wounded pride, "I don't think men are apt to recognize prior claims."

Reuben replied only by a faint sardonic smile.

"You're a good fellow, Phil, but you won't marry her."

"Of course, then, you know why," said Phil, with something very like a sneer.

"Certainly," said Reuben. "Because you can't affront the world, because you are bound by its conventionalities and respectabilities, as I am not. I spurn them."

"Respectabilities!" said Phil, in amazement. "What does this mean? Just now she was a Puritan."

"It means, Phil," (and here Reuben reflected a moment or two, puffing with savage energy,) "it means what I can't wholly explain to you. You know her French blood; you know all the prejudices against the faith in which she was reared; you know she has an instinct and will of her own. In short, Phil, I don't think you'll ever marry her; but if you can, you may."

"*May!*" said Phil, whose pride was now touched to the quick. "And what authority have you, pray?"

"The authority of one who has loved her," said Reuben, with a fierce, quick tone, and dashing his half-burnt cigar from the window; "the authority of one who, if he had chosen to perjure himself and profess a faith which he could not entertain, and wear sanctimonious airs, might have won her heart."

"I don't believe it!" said Phil, with a great burst of voice. "There 's no hypocrisy could win Adèle."

Reuben paced up and down the chamber, then came and took the hand of his old friend: —

"Phil, you 're a noble-hearted fellow. I never thought any one could convict me of injustice to Adèle. You have done it. I hope you 'll always defend her; and whatever may betide, I hope your mother and Rose will always befriend her. She may need it."

Again there was a little burst of song from below, and it lingered upon the ear of Reuben long after he had left the Elderkin homestead.

The next day he was gone, — to try his new taste of the world.

XLVIII.

IT was in no way possible for the simple-hearted Doctor to conceal from the astute spinster the particular circumstances which had hurried Reuben's departure, and the knowledge of them made her humiliation complete. During all the latter months of Reuben's stay she had not scrupled to drop occasional praises of him in the ear of Adèle, as in the old times. It was in agreement with her rigid notions of retribution, that this poor social outlaw should love vainly; and a baffling disappointment would have seemed to the spinster's narrow mind a highly proper and most logical result of the terrible ignominy which overhung the unconscious victim. Indeed, the innocent unconsciousness of any thing derogatory to her name or character which belonged to Adèle, and her consequent cheery mirthfulness, were sources of infinite annoyance to Miss Eliza. She would have liked to see her in sackcloth for a while, and to enjoy her own moral elevation by such a contrast. Nor was this from sheer malice; in that sense she was not malicious; but she deluded herself with the idea that this was a high

religious view of sin and its consequences, — a proper mortification to befall one on whom Heaven's punishment (of the fathers through the children) must needs descend. And like many another of her iron purpose, she would not have shrunk from being herself the instrument of such punishment, and would have gloated over its accomplishment, — as if by it the Devil's devices had received rebuke, and the elect found cause for comfort. Many good people — as the world goes — have this vulture appetite for preying upon the very bowels of sinners; and there is no judge so implacable as one who inflames his judicial zeal with the fiery heats of an exaggerated religious pretension.

Think, then, of the situation of poor Adèle under the attentions of such a woman, after she has ferreted out from the Doctor the truth with respect to Reuben! It makes us tremble while we write of it. There is often a kind of moral tyranny in households, which, without ever a loud word, much less a blow, can pierce a sensitive mind as with fiery needles. Of such a silent, fearful tyranny Adèle now felt the innumerable stings, and under it her natural exuberance of spirits gave way, her faith almost waned; it seemed to her that a kiss upon her silent crucifix were better than a prayer shared with her tormentor.

The Doctor showed all his old, grave kindness; but he was sadly broken by his anxieties with respect to

his son; nor was he ever demonstrative enough to supply the craving of Adèle's heart, under her present greed for sympathy. Even the villagers looked upon her more coldly since the sharpened speech of the spinster had dropped widely, but very quietly, its damaging innuendoes, and since her well-calculated surmises, that French blood was, after all, not to be wholly trusted. It was clear to the towns-people that all was at an end between Adèle and Reuben, — clear that she had fallen away from the old favor in which she once stood at the parsonage; and Miss Eliza, by her adroit hints, and without any palpable violation of truth, found means of associating these results with certain suspicious circumstances which had come to light respecting the poor girl's character, — circumstances for which she herself (Miss Eliza was kind enough to say) was not altogether accountable, perhaps, but yet sufficient to warrant a little reserve of confidence, and *of course* putting an end to any thought of intimate alliance with "the Johns family." She even whispered in her most insidious manner into the ear of old Mistress Tew, — who, being somewhat deaf, is the most inveterate village gossip, — that "it was hard for the poor thing, when Reuben left so suddenly."

Adèle writes in these times to her father, that he need put himself in no fear in regard to marriage.

"I have had an *éclaircissement*" (she says) "with friend Reuben. His declaration of attachment (I think I may tell *you* this, dear papa) was so wholly unexpected that I could not count it real. He seemed actuated by some sudden controlling sympathy (as he often is) that I could not explain; and had it been otherwise, your injunction, dear papa, and the fact that he has become a bitter skeptic in regard to our most holy religion, would have made me pause. He dropped a hint, too, of the mystery attaching to my family, (not unkindly, for he is, after all, a dear, good-hearted fellow,) which kindled not a little indignation in me; and I told him — with some of the pride, I think, I must have inherited from you, papa — that, until that mystery was cleared, I would marry neither him nor another. Was I not right?

"I want so much to be with you again, dear papa, — to tell you all I hope and fear, — to feel your kiss again! Miss Johns, whom I have tried hard to love, but cannot, is changed wofully in her manner toward me. I feel it is only my home now by sufferance, — not such a home as you would choose for me, I am sure. The Doctor — good soul — is as kind as he knows how to be, but I want — oh, how I want! — to leap into your arms, dear papa, and find home there. Why can I not? I am sure — over and over sure — that I could bring some sunlight into a home of yours,

if you would but let me. And when you come, as you say you mean to do soon, do not put me off with such stories as you once told me, of 'a lean Savoyard in red wig and spectacles, and of a fat Frenchman with bristly mustache' (you see I remember all); tell me I may come to be the mistress of your parlor and your *salon*, and I will keep all in such order, that, I am sure, you will not want me to leave you again; and you will love me so much that I shall never want to leave you.

"Indeed, indeed, it is very wearisome to me here. The village people seem all of them to have caught the coolness of Miss Johns, and look askance at me. Only the Elderkins show their old kindness, and it is unfailing. Do not, I pray, disturb yourself about any 'lost fortune' of which you wrote to the Doctor, but never — cruel papa! — a word to me. I am rich: I can't tell you how many dollars are in the Savings Bank for me, — and for you, if you wish them, I have so little occasion to spend any thing. But I have committed the extravagance of placing a beautiful tablet over the grave of poor Madame Arles, and, much to the horror of the good Doctor, insisted upon having a little cross inscribed upon its front. You have never told me, dear papa, if you received the long account I gave you of her sudden death, and how she died without ever telling me any thing of herself, — though I believe it was in her mind to do so, at the last."

No, of a truth, such letter had never been received by Maverick, and he cursed the mails royally for it, since it might have prevented the need of any such disclosure as he had made to his friend Johns. When the present missive of Adèle came to him, he was entering the brilliant Café de L'Orient at Marseilles, in company with his friend Papiol. The news staggered him for a moment.

"Papiol!" said he, "*mon ami*, Julie is dead!"

"*Parbleu!* And among your Puritans, yonder? She must have made a piquant story of it all!"

"Not a word, Papiol! She has kept by her promise bravely."

"*Tant mieux:* it will give you good appetite, *mon ami*."

For a moment the better nature of Maverick had been roused, and he turned a look of loathing upon the complacent Frenchman seated by him (which fortunately the stolid Papiol did not comprehend). For a moment, his thought ran back to a sunny hill-side near to the old town of Arles, where lines of stunted, tawny olives crept down the fields, — where fig-trees showed their purple nodules of fruit, — where a bright-faced young peasant-girl, with a gay kerchief turbaned about her head with a coquettish tie, lay basking in the sunshine. He heard once more the trip of her voice warbling a Provençal song, while the great ruin of the

Roman *arène* came once more to his vision, with its tufting shrubs and battered arches rising grim and gaunt into the soft Southern sky; the church-bells of the town poured their sweet jangle on his ear again, the murmur of distant voices came floating down the wind, and again the pretty Provençal song fluttered on the balmy air; the coquettish turban was in his eye, the plump, soft hand of the pretty Provençal girl in his grasp, and her glossy locks touched his burning cheek. So much, at least, that was Arcadian; and then (in his glowing memory still) the loves, the jealousies, the delusions, the concealments, the faithlessness, the desertion, the parting! And now, — now the chief actress in this drama that had touched him so nearly lay buried in a New England grave, with his own Adèle her solitary mourner!

"It was your friend the Doctor who gave the good woman absolution, I suppose," said Papiol, tapping his snuff-box, and gathering a huge pinch between thumb and finger.

"Not even that comfort, I suspect," said Maverick.

"*Bah! pauvre femme!*"

And the philosopher titillated his nostril until he sneezed again and again.

"And the Doctor," continued Papiol, — "does he suspect nothing?"

"Nothing. He has counselled me to make what amends I may by marrying — you know whom."

"*Pardieu!* he is a good innocent, that old friend of yours!"

"Better than you or I, Papiol."

"*Cela va sans dire, mon ami.* And *la petite*, — the little bright-eyes, — what of her?"

"She is unsuspicious, but hints at a little cloud that overshadows her domestic history, and tells her lover that it shall be cleared up before she will marry him, or any other."

"Ta, ta! It's an inquisitive sex, Maverick! I could never quite understand how Julie should have learned that her little one was still alive, and been able to trace her as she did. I think the death was set forth in the "Gazette," — eh, Maverick?"

"It certainly was," said Maverick, — "honestly, for the child's good."

"Ha! — honestly, — *bon!* I beg pardon, *mon ami.*" And Papiol took snuff again.

"Set forth in the "Gazette," *en règle*, and came to Julie's knowledge, as I am sure; and she sailed for the East with her brother, who was a small trader in Smyrna, I believe, — poor woman! To tell truth, Papiol, had she been alive, loving Adèle as I do, I believe I should have been tempted to follow the parson's admonition, cost what it might."

"And then?"

"And then I should give *petite* an honest name to

bear, — honest as I could, at least; and would have lavished wealth upon her, as I mean to do; and made the last half of my life better than the first."

"Excellent! most excellent! considering that the lady is dead, *pauvre femme!* And now, my dear fellow, you might go over to your country and play the good Puritan by marrying Mees Eliza, — *hein?*"

And he called out obstreperously, —

"*Garçon!*"

"*Voici, Messieurs!*"

"*Absinthe, — deux verres.*"

And he drummed with his fat fingers upon the edge of the marble slab.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Maverick, with a sudden pallor on his face, "who is she?"

The eyes of Papiol fastened upon the figure which had arrested the attention of Maverick, — a lady of, may be, forty years, fashionably and gracefully attired, with olive-brown complexion, hair still glossy black, and attended by a strange gentleman with a brusk and foreign air.

"Who is she?" says Maverick, in a great tremor. "Do the dead come to haunt us?"

"You are facetious, my friend," said Papiol.

But in the next moment the lady opposite had raised her eyes, showing that strange double look which had been so characteristic of Madame Arles, and poor Papiol was himself fearfully distraught.

"It 's true! it 's true, *mon ami!*" he whispered his friend. "It 's Julie! — *elle même*, — Julie!"

Maverick, too, had met that glance, and he trembled like a leaf. He gazed upon the stranger like one who sees a specter. And she met his glance, boldly at the first; then the light faded from her eyes, her head drooped, and she fell in a swoon upon the shoulder of her companion.

XLIX.

AT about the date of this interview which we have described as having taken place beyond the seas, — upon one of those warm days of early winter, which, even in New England, sometimes cheat one into a feeling of spring, — Adèle came strolling up the little path that led from the parsonage gate to the door, twirling her muff upon her hand, and thinking — thinking — But who shall undertake to translate the thought of a girl of nineteen in such moment of reverie? With the most matter of fact of lives it would be difficult. But in view of the experience of Adèle, and of that fateful mystery overhanging her, — well, think for yourself, — you who touch upon a score of years, with their hopes, — you who have a passionate, clinging nature, and only some austere, prim matron to whom you may whisper your confidences, — what would you have thought, as you twirled your muff, and sauntered up the path to a home that was yours only by sufferance, and yet, thus far, your only home?

The chance villagers, seeing her lithe figure, her well-fitting pelisse, her jaunty hat, her blooming

cheeks, may have said, "There goes a fortunate one!" But if the thought of poor Adèle took one shape more than another, as she returned that day from a visit to her sweet friend Rose, it was this: "How drearily unfortunate I am!" And here a little burst of childish laughter breaks on her ear. Adèle, turning to the sound, sees that poor outcast woman who had been the last and most constant attendant upon Madame Arles coming down the street, with her little boy frolicking beside her. Obeying an impulse she was in no mood to resist, she turns back to the gate to greet them; she caresses the boy; she has kindly words for the mother, who could have worshiped her for the kiss she has given to her outcast child.

"I likes you," says the sturdy urchin, sidling closer to the parsonage gate, over which Adèle leans. "You 's like the French ooman."

Whereupon Adèle, in the exuberance of her kindly feelings, can only lean over and kiss the child again.

Miss Johns, looking from her chamber, is horrified. Had it been summer, she would have lifted her window and summoned Adèle. But she never forgot — that exemplary woman — the proprieties of the seasons, any more than other proprieties; she tapped upon the glass with her thimble, and beckoned the innocent offender into the parsonage.

"I am astonished, Adèle!" — these were her first

words; and she went on to belabor the poor girl in fearful ways, — all the more fearful because she spoke in the calmest possible tones. She never used others, indeed; and it is not to be doubted that she reckoned this forbearance among her virtues.

Adèle made no reply, — too wise now for that; but she winced, and bit her lips severely, as the irate spinster "gave Miss Maverick to understand that an intercourse which might possibly be agreeable to her French associations could never be tolerated at the home of Dr. Johns. For herself, she had a reputation for propriety to sustain; and while Miss Maverick made a portion of her household, she must comply with the rules of decorum; and if Miss Maverick were ignorant of those rules, she had better inform herself."

No reply, as we have said, — unless it may have been by an impatient stamp of her little foot, which the spinster could not perceive.

But it is the signal, in her quick, fiery nature, of a determination to leave the parsonage, if the thing be possible. From her chamber, where she goes only to arrange her hair and to wipe off an angry tear or two, she walks straight into the study of the parson.

"Doctor," (the "New Papa" is reserved for her tenderer or playful moments now), "are you quite sure that papa will come for me in the spring?"

"He writes me so, Adaly. Why?"

Adèle seeks to control herself, but she cannot wholly. "It 's not pleasant for me any longer here, New Papa, — indeed it is not ; " — and her voice breaks utterly.

"But, Adaly ! — child ! " says the Doctor, closing his book.

"It 's wholly different from what it once was ; it 's irksome to Miss Eliza, — I know it is ; it 's irksome to me. I want to leave. Why does n't papa come for me at once ? Why should n't he ? What is this mystery, New Papa ? Will you not tell me ? " — and she comes toward him, and lays her hand upon his shoulder in her old winning, fond way. "Why may I not know ? Do you think I am not brave to bear whatever must some day be known ? What if my poor mother be unworthy ? I can love her ! I can love her ! "

"Ah, Adaly," said the parson, "whatever may have been her unworthiness, it can never afflict you more ; I believe that she is in her grave, Adaly."

Adèle sunk upon her knees, with her hands clasped as if in prayer. Was it strange that the child should pray for the mother she had never seen ?

From the day when Maverick had declared her unworthiness, Adèle had cherished secretly the hope of some day meeting her, of winning her by her love, of clasping her arms about her neck and whispering in her ear, "God is good, and we are all God's children ! "

But in her grave! Well, at least justice will be done her then; and, calmed by this thought, Adèle is herself once more, — earnest as ever to break away from the scathing looks of the spinster.

The Doctor has not spoken without authority, since Maverick, in his reply to the parson's suggestions respecting marriage, has urged that the party was totally unfit, to a degree of which the parson himself was a witness, and by further hints had served fully to identify, in the mind of the old gentleman, poor Madame Arles with the mother of Adèle. A knowledge of this fact had grievously wounded the Doctor; he could not cease to recall the austerity with which he had debarred the poor woman all intercourse with Adèle upon her sick-bed. And it seemed to him a grave thing, wherever sin might lie, thus to alienate the mother and daughter. His unwitting agency in the matter had made him of late specially mindful of all the wishes and even caprices of Adèle, — much to the annoyance of Miss Eliza. "Adaly, my child, you are very dear to me," said he; and she stood by him now, toying with those gray locks of his, in a caressing manner which he could never know from a child of his own, — never. "If it be your wish to change your home for the little time that remains, it shall be. I have your father's authority to do so."

"Indeed I do wish it, New Papa;" — and she

dropped a kiss upon his forehead, — upon the forehead where so few tender tokens of love had ever fallen, or ever would fall. Yet it was very grateful to the old gentleman, though it made him think with a sigh of the lost ones.

The Doctor talked over the affair with Miss Eliza, who avowed herself as eager as Adèle for a change in her home, and suggested that Benjamin should take counsel with his old friend, Mr Elderkin; and it is quite possible that she shrewdly anticipated the result of such a consultation.

Certain it is that the old Squire caught at the suggestion in a moment.

"The very thing, Doctor! I see how it is. Miss Eliza is getting on in years; a little irritable, possibly, — though a most excellent person, Doctor, — most excellent! and there being no young people in the house, it 's a little dull for Miss Adèle, — eh, Doctor? Grace, you know, is not with us this winter; so your lodger shall come straight to my house, and she shall take the room of Grace, and Rose will be delighted, and Mrs. Elderkin will be delighted; and as for Phil, when he happens with us, — as he does only off and on now, — he 'll be falling in love with her, I have n't a doubt; or, if he does n't, I shall be tempted to myself. She 's a fine girl, eh, Doctor?"

"She 's a good Christian, I believe," said the Doctor gravely.

"I have n't a doubt of it," said the Squire; "and I hope that a bit of a dance about Christmas time, if we should fall into that wickedness, would n't harm her on that score, — eh, Doctor?"

"I should wish, Mr. Elderkin, that she maintain her usual propriety of conduct, until she is again in her father's charge."

"Well, well, Doctor, you shall talk with Mrs. Elderkin of that matter."

So, it is all arranged. Miss Johns expresses a quiet gratification at the result, and — it is specially agreeable to her to feel that the responsibility of giving shelter and countenance to Miss Maverick is now shared by so influential a family as that of the Elderkins. Rose is overjoyed, and can hardly do enough to make the new home agreeable to Adèle; while the mistress of the house — mild, and cheerful, and sunny, diffusing content every evening over the little circle around her hearth — wins Adèle to a new cheer. Yet it is a cheer that is tempered by many sad thoughts of her own loneliness, and of her alienation from any motherly smiles and greetings that are truly hers.

Phil is away at her coming; but a week after he bursts into the house on a snowy December night, and there is a great stamping in the hall, and a little grandchild of the house pipes from the half-opened door, "It 's Uncle Phil!" and there is a loud

smack upon the cheek of Rose, who runs to give him welcome, and a hearty, honest grapple with the hand of the old Squire, and then another kiss upon the cheek of the old mother, who meets him before he is fairly in the room, — a kiss upon her cheek, and another, and another. Phil loves the old lady with an honest warmth that kindles the admiration of poor Adèle, who, amid all this demonstration of family affection, feels herself more cruelly than ever a stranger in the household, — a stranger, indeed, to the interior and private joys of any household.

Yet such enthusiasm is, somehow, contagious; and when Phil meets Adèle with a shake of the hand and a hearty greeting, she returns it with an out-spoken, homely warmth, at thought of which she finds herself blushing a moment after. To tell truth, Phil is rather a fine-looking fellow at this time, — strong, manly, with a comfortable assurance of manner, — a face beaming with *bonhomie*, cheeks glowing with that sharp December drive, and a wild, glad sparkle in his eye, as Rose whispers him that Adèle has become one of the household. It is no wonder, perhaps, that the latter finds the bit of embroidery she is upon somewhat perplexing, so that she has to consult Rose pretty often in regard to the different shades, and twirl the worsteds over and over, until confusion about the colors shall restore her own equanimity. Phil, meantime, dashes

on, in his own open, frank way, about his drive, and the state of the ice in the river, and some shipments he had made from New York to Porto Rico, — on capital terms, too.

"And did you see much of Reuben?" asks Mrs. Elderkin.

"Not much;" and Phil (glancing that way) sees that Adèle is studying her crimsons; "but he tells me he is doing splendidly in some business venture to the Mediterranean with Brindlock; he could hardly talk of any thing else. It 's odd to find him so wrapped up in money-making."

"I hope he 'll not be wrapped up in any thing worse," said Mrs. Elderkin, with a sigh.

"Nonsense, mother!" burst in the old Squire; "Reuben 'll come out all right yet."

"He says he means to know all sides of the world, now," says Phil, with a little laugh.

"He 's not so bad as he pretends to be, Phil," answered the Squire. "I knew the Major's hot ways; so did you, Grace (turning to the wife). It 's a boy's talk. There 's good blood in him."

And the two girls, — yonder, the other side of the hearth, — Adèle and Rose, have given over their little earnest comparison of views about the colors, and sit stitching, and stitching, and thinking — and thinking —

L.

PHIL had at no time given over his thought of Adèle, and of the possibility of some day winning her for himself, though he had been somewhat staggered by the interview already described with Reuben. It is doubtful, even, if the quiet *permission* which this latter had granted (or, with an affectation of arrogance, had seemed to grant) had not itself made him pause. There are some things which a man never wants any permission to do; and one of those is — to love a woman. All the permissions — whether of competent authority or of incompetent — only retard him. It is an affair in which he must find his own permit, by his own power; and without it there can be no joy in conquest.

So when Phil recalled Reuben's expression on that memorable afternoon in his chamber, — "You *may* marry her, Phil," — it operated powerfully to dispossess him of all intention and all earnestness of pursuit. The little doubt and mystery which Reuben had thrown, in the same interview, upon the family relations of Adèle, did not weigh a straw in the comparison.

He had plunged into his business pursuits with a new zeal, and easily put away all present thought of matrimony, by virtue of that simple "may" of Reuben's.

But now when, on coming back, he found her in his own home, — so tenderly cared for by mother and by sister, — so coy and reticent in his presence, the old fever burned again. It was not now a simple watching of her figure upon the street that told upon him; but her constant presence; — the rustle of her dress up and down the stairs; her fresh, fair face every day at table; the tapping of her light feet along the hall; the little musical bursts of laughter (not Rose's, — oh, no!) that came from time to time floating through the open door of his chamber. All this Rose saw and watched with the highest glee, — finding her own little, quiet means of promoting such accidents, — and rejoicing (as sisters will, where the enslaver is a friend) in the captivity of poor Phil. For an honest lover, propinquity is always dangerous, — most of all, the propinquity in one's own home. The sister's caresses of the charmer, the mother's kind looks, the father's playful banter, and the whisk of a silken dress (with a new music in it) along the balusters you have passed night and morning for years, have a terrible executive power.

In short, Adèle had not been a month with the Elderkins before Phil was tied there by bonds he had never known the force of before.

And how was it with Adèle?

That strong, religious element in her, — abating no jot in its fervor, — which had found a shock in the case of Reuben, met none with Philip. He had slipped into the mother's belief and reverence, not by any spell of suffering or harrowing convictions, but by a kind of insensible growth toward them, and an easy, deliberate, moderate living by them, which more active and incisive minds cannot comprehend. He had no great wastes of doubt to perplex him, like Reuben, simply because his intelligence was of a more submissive order, and never tested its faiths or beliefs by that delicately sensitive mental apparel with which Reuben was clothed all over, and which suggested a doubt or a hindrance where Phil would have recognized none; — the best stuff in him, after all, of which a hale, hearty, contented man can be made, — the stuff that takes on age with dignity, that wastes no power, that conserves every element of manliness to fourscore. Too great keenness does not know the name of content; its only experience of joy is by spasms, when Idealism puts its prism to the eye and shows all things in those gorgeous hues, which to-morrow fade. Such mind and temper shock the *physique*, shake it down, strain the nervous organization; and the body, writhing under fierce cerebral thrusts, goes tottering to the grave. Is it strange if doubts belong to those writh-

ings? Are there no such creatures as constitutional doubters, or, possibly, constitutional believers?

It would have been strange if the calm, mature repose of Phil's manner, — never disturbed except when Adèle broke upon him suddenly and put him to a momentary confusion, of which the pleasant fluttering of her own heart gave account, — strange, if this had not won upon her regard, — strange, if it had not given hint of that cool, masculine superiority in him, with which even the most ethereal of women like to be impressed. There was about him also a quiet, business-like concentration of mind which the imaginative girl might have overlooked or undervalued, but which the budding, thoughtful woman must needs recognize and respect. Nor will it seem strange, if, by contrast, it made the excitable Reuben seem more dismally afloat and vagrant. Yet how could she forget the passionate pressure of his hand, the appealing depth of that gray eye of the parson's son, and the burning words of his that stuck in her memory like thorns?

Phil, indeed, might have spoken in a way that would have driven the blood back upon her heart; for there was a world of passionate capability under his calm exterior. She dreaded lest he might. She shunned all provoking occasion, as a bird shuns the grasp of even the most tender hand, under whose clasp the pinions will flutter vainly.

When Rose said now, as she was wont to say, after some generous deed of his, "Phil is a good, kind, noble fellow!" Adèle affected not to hear, and asked Rose, with a bustling air, if she was "quite sure that she had the right shade of brown" in the worsted work they were upon.

So the Christmas season came and went. The Squire cherished a traditional regard for its old festivities, not only by reason of a general festive inclination that was very strong in him, but from a desire to protest in a quiet way against what he called the pestilent religious severities of a great many of the parish, who ignored the day because it was a high holiday in the Popish Church, and in that other, which, under the wing of Episcopacy, was following, in their view, fast after the Babylonish traditions. There was Deacon Tourtelot, for instance, who never failed on a Christmas morning — if weather and sledding were good — to get up his long team (the restive two-year-olds upon the neap) and drive through the main street, with a great clamor of "Haw, Diamond!" and "Gee, Buck and Bright!" — as if to insist upon the secular character of the day. Indeed, with the old-fashioned New-England religious faith, an exuberant, demonstrative joyousness could not gracefully or easily be welded. The hopes that reposed even upon Christ's coming, with its tidings of great joy, must be solemn. And

the anniversary of a glorious birth, which, by traditionary impulse, made half the world glad, was to such believers like any other day in the calendar. Even the good Doctor pointed his Christmas prayer with no special unction. What, indeed, were anniversaries, or a yearly proclamation of peace and good-will to men, with those who, on every Sabbath morning, saw the heavens open above the sacred desk, and heard the golden promises expounded, and the thunders of coming retribution echo under the ceiling of the Tabernacle?

The Christmas came and went with a great lighting-up of the Elderkin house; and there were green garlands which Rose and Adèle have plaited over the mantel, and over the stiff family portraits; and good Phil — in the character of Santa Claus — has stuffed the stockings of all the grandchildren, and — in the character of the bashful lover — has played like a moth about the blazing eyes of Adèle.

Yet the current of the village gossip has it, that they are to marry. Miss Eliza, indeed, shakes her head wisely, and keeps her own counsel. But Dame Tourtelot reports to old Mistress Tew, — "Phil Elderkin is goin' to marry the French girl."

"Haöw?" says Mrs. Tew, adjusting her tin trumpet.

"Phil Elderkin — is — a-goin' to marry the French girl," screams the Dame.

"Du tell! Goin' to settle in Ashfield?"

"I don't know."

"No! Where, then?" says Mistress Tew.

"I don't KNOW," shrieks the Dame.

"Oh!" chimes Mrs. Tew; and, after reflecting awhile and smoothing out her cap-strings, she says, — "I've heerd the French gurl keeps a cross in her chamber."

"*She* DOOZ," explodes the Dame.

"I want to know! I wonder the Squire don't put a stop to 't."

"Doän't believe *he would if he* COULD," says the Dame, snappishly.

"Waäl, waäl! it's a wicked world we're a-livin' in, Miss Tourtelot." And she elevates her trumpet, as if she were eager to get a confirmation of that fact.

LI.

IN those days to which our narrative has now reached, the Doctor was far more feeble than when we first met him. His pace has slackened, and there is an occasional totter in his step. There are those among his parishioners who say that his memory is failing. On one or two Sabbaths of the winter he has preached sermons scarce two years old. There are acute listeners who are sure of it. And the spinster has been horrified on learning that, once or twice, the old gentleman — escaping her eye — has taken his walk to the post-office, unwittingly wearing his best cloak wrong-side out; as if — for so good a man — the green baize were not as proper a covering as the brown camlet!

The parson is himself conscious of these short-comings, and speaks with resignation of the growing infirmities which, as he modestly hints, will compel him shortly to give place to some younger and more zealous expounder of the faith. His parochial visits grow more and more rare. All other failings could be more easily pardoned than this; but in a country parish like Ashfield, it was quite imperative that the old chaise

should keep up its familiar rounds, and the occasional tea-fights in the out-lying houses be honored by the gray head of the Doctor or by his evening benediction. Two hour-long sermons a week and a Wednesday evening discourse were very well in their way, but by no means met all the requirements of those steadfast old ladies whose socialities were both exhaustive and exacting. Indeed, it is doubtful if there do not exist even now, in most country parishes of New England, a few most excellent and notable women, who delight in an overworked parson, for the pleasure they take in recommending their teas, and plasters, and nostrums. The more frail and attenuated the teacher, the more he takes hold upon their pity; and in losing the vigor of the flesh, he seems to their compassionate eyes to grow into the spiritualities they pine for. But he must not give over his visitings; *that* hair-cloth shirt of penance he must wear to the end, if he would achieve saintship.

Now, just at this crisis, it happens that there is a tall, thin, pale young man — Rev. Theophilus Catesby by name, and nephew of the late Deacon Simmons (now unhappily deceased) — who has preached in Ashfield on several occasions to the "great acceptance" of the people. Talk is imminent of naming him colleague to Dr. Johns. The matter is discussed, at first, (agreeably to custom,) in the sewing-circle of the town. After this, it comes informally before the church brethren.

The duty to the Doctor and to the parish is plain enough. The practical question is, how cheaply can the matter be accomplished?

The salary of the good Doctor has grown, by progressive increase, to be at this date some seven hundred dollars a year, — a very considerable stipend for a country parish in that day. It was understood that the proposed colleague would expect six hundred. The two joined made a somewhat appalling sum for the people of Ashfield. They tried to combat it in a variety of ways, — over tea-tables and barn-yard gates, as well as in their formal conclaves; earnest for a good thing in the way of preaching, but earnest for a good bargain, too.

"I say, Huldy," said the Deacon, in discussion of the affair over his wife's fireside, "I would n't wonder if the Doctor 'ad put up somethin' handsome between the French girl's boardin', and odds and ends."

"What if he ha'n't, Tourtelot? Miss Johns 's got property, and what 's *she* goin' to do with it, I want to know?"

"On this hint the Deacon spoke, in his next encounter with the Squire upon the street, with more boldness.

"It 's my opinion, Squire, the Doctor's folks are pooty well off, now; and if we make a trade with the new minister, so 's he 'll take the biggest half o' the

hard work of the parish, I think the old Doctor 'ud worry along tol'able well on three or four hundred a year; heh, Squire?"

"Well Deacon, I don't know about that; — don't know. Butcher's meat is always butcher's meat, Deacon."

"So it is, Squire; and not so dreadful high, nuther. I 've got a likely two-year-old in the yard, that 'll dress abaout a hundred to a quarter, and I don't pretend to ask but twenty-five dollars; know any body that wants such a critter, Squire?"

With very much of the same relevancy of observation the affair is bandied about for a week or more in the discussions at the society-meetings, with danger of never coming to any practical issue, when a wiry little man — in a black Sunday coat, whose tall collar chafes the back of his head near to the middle — rises from a corner where he has grown vexed with the delay, and bursts upon the solemn conclave in this style: —

"Brethren, I ha'n't been home to chore-time in the last three days, and my wife is gittin' worked up abaout it. Here we 've bin a-settin' and a-talkin' night arter night, and arternoon arter arternoon for more 'n a week, and 'pears to me it 's abaout time as tho' somethin' o' ruther ought to be done. There 's nobody got nothin' agin the Doctor that I 've *heerd* of. He 's a smart old gentleman, and he 's a clever old gentleman,

and he preaches what I call good, stiff doctrine; but we don't feel much like payin' for light work same as what we paid when the work was heavy, — 'specially if we git a new minister on our hands. But then, brethren, I don't for one feel like turnin' an old hoss that 's done good sarvice, when he gits stiff in the j'ints, into slim pastur', and I don't feel like stuffin' on 'em with bog hay in the winter. There 's folks that dooz; but *I* don't. Now, brethren, I motion that we continner to give as much as five hundred dollars to the old Doctor, and make the best dicker we can with the new minister; and I 'll clap ten dollars on to my pew-rent; and the Deacon there, if he 's any thing of a man, 'll do as much agin. I know he 's able to."

Let no one smile. The halting prudence, the inevitable calculating process through which the small country New-Englander arrives at his charities, is but the growth of his associations. He gets hardly; and what he gets hardly he must bestow with self-questionings. If he lives "in the small," he cannot give "in the large." His pennies, by the necessities of his toil, are each as big as pounds; yet his charities, in nine cases out of ten, bear as large a proportion to his revenue as the charities of those who count gains by tens of thousands. Liberality is, after all, comparative, and is exceptionally great only when its sources are exceptionally small. That "*widow's mite*" — the only char-

ity ever specially commended by the great Master of charities — will tinkle pleasantly on the ear of human ity ages hence, when the clinking millions of cities are forgotten.

The new arrangement all comes to the ear of Reuben, who writes back in a very brusk way to the Doctor: "Why on earth, father, don't you cut all connection with the parish? You 've surely done your part in that service. Don't let the 'minister's pay' be any hindrance to you, for I am getting on swimmingly in my business ventures, — thanks to Mr. Brindlock. I enclose a check for two hundred dollars, and can send you one of equal amount every quarter, without feeling it. Why should n't a man of your years have rest?"

And the Doctor, in his reply, says: "My rest, Reuben, is God's work. I am deeply grateful to you, and only wish that your generosity were hallowed by a deeper trust in His providence and mercy. O Reuben! Reuben! a night cometh, when no man can work! You seem to imagine, my son, that some slight has been put upon me by recent arrangements in the parish. It is not so; and I am sure that none has been intended. A servant of Christ can receive no reproach at the hands of his people, save this, — that he has failed to warn them of the judgment to come, and to point out to them the ark of safety."

Correspondence between the father and son is not infrequent in these days; for, since Reuben has slipped away from home control utterly, — being now well past one and twenty, — the Doctor has forborne that magisterial tone which, in his old-fashioned way, it was his wont to employ, while yet the son was subject to his legal authority. Under these conditions, Reuben is won into more communicativeness, — even upon those religious topics which are always prominent in the Doctor's letters; indeed, it would seem that the son rather enjoyed a little logical fence with the old gentleman, and a passing lunge, now and then, at his severities; still weltering in his unbelief, but wearing it more lightly (as the father saw with pain) by reason of the great crowd of sympathizers at his back.

"It is so rare," he writes, "to fall in with one who earnestly and heartily seems to believe what he says he believes. And if you meet him in a preacher at a street-corner, declaiming with a mad fervor, people cry out, 'A fanatic!' Why should n't he be? I can't, for my life, see. Why should n't every fervent believer of the truths he teaches rush through the streets to divert the great crowd, with voice and hand, from the inevitable doom? I see the honesty of your faith, father, though there seems a strained harshness in it when I think of the complacency with which you must needs contemplate the irremediable perdition of such hosts of

outcasts. In Adèle, too, there seems a beautiful singleness of trust; but I suppose God made the birds to live in the sky.

"You need not fear my falling into what you call the Pantheism of the moralists; it is every way too cold for my hot blood. It seems to me that the moral icicles with which their doctrine is fringed (and the fringe is the beauty of it) must needs melt under any passionate human clasp, — such clasp as I should want to give (if I gave any) to a great hope for the future. I should feel more like groping my way into such hope by the light of the golden candlesticks of Rome even. But do not be disturbed, father; I fear I should make, just now, no better Papist than Presbyterian."

The Doctor reads such letters in a maze. Can it indeed be a son of his own loins who thus bandies language about the solemn truths of Christianity? "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim! How shall I set thee as Zeboim!"

LII.

IN the early spring of 1842, — we are not quite sure of the date, but it was at any rate shortly after the establishment of the Reverend Theophilus Catesby at Ashfield, — the Doctor was in the receipt of a new letter from his friend Maverick, which set all his old calculations adrift. It was not Madame Arles, after all, who was the mother of Adèle; and the poor gentleman found that he had wasted a great deal of needless sympathy in that direction. But we shall give the details of the news more succinctly and straightforwardly by laying before our readers some portions of Maverick's letter.

"I find, my dear Johns," he writes, "that my suspicions in regard to a matter of which I wrote you very fully in my last were wholly untrue. How I could have been so deceived, I cannot even now fairly explain; but nothing is more certain, than that the person calling herself Madame Arles (since dead, as I learn from Adèle) was not the mother of my child. My mistake in this will the more surprise you, when I state that I had a glimpse of this personage (unknown

to you) upon my visit to America; and though it was but a passing glimpse, it seemed to me — though many years had gone by since my last sight of her — that I could have sworn to her identity. And coupling this resemblance, as I very naturally did, with her devotion to my poor Adèle, I could form but one conclusion.

"The mother of my child, however, still lives. I have seen her. You will commiserate me in advance with the thought that I have found her among the vile ones of what you count this vile land. But you are wrong, my dear Johns. So far as appearance and present conduct go, no more reputable lady ever crossed your own threshold. The meeting was acci dental, but the recognition on both sides absolute, and, on the part of the lady, so emotional as to draw the attention of the *habitués* of the café where I chanced to be dining. Her manner and bearing, indeed, were such as to provoke me to a renewal of our old acquaintance, with honorable intentions, — even independent of those suggestions of duty to herself and to Adèle which you have urged.

"But I have to give you, my dear Johns, a new surprise. All overtures of my own toward a renewal of acquaintance have been decisively repulsed. I learn that she has been living for the past fifteen years or more with her brother, now a wealthy merchant of

Smyrna, and that she has a reputation there as a *dévote*, and is widely known for the charities which her brother's means place within her reach. It would thus seem that even this French woman, contrary to your old theory, is atoning for an early sin by a life of penance.

"And now, my dear Johns, I have to confess to you another deceit of mine. This woman — Julie Chalet when I knew her of old, and still wearing the name — has no knowledge that she has a child now living. To divert all inquiry, and to insure entire alienation of my little girl from all French ties, I caused a false mention of the death of Adèle to be inserted in the "Gazette" of Marseilles. I know you will be very much shocked at this, my dear Johns, and perhaps count it as large a sin as the grosser one; that I committed it for the child's sake will be no excuse in your eye, I know. You may count me as bad as you choose, — only give me credit for the fatherly affection which would still make the path as easy and as thornless as I can for my poor daughter.

"If Julie, the mother of Adèle, knew to-day of her existence, — if I should carry that information to her, — I am sure that all her rigidities would be consumed like flax in a flame. That method, at least, is left for winning her to any action upon which I may determine. Shall I use it? I ask you as one who, I am

sure, has learned to love Adèle, and who, I hope, has not wholly given over a friendly feeling toward me. Consider well, however, that the mother is now one of the most rigid of Catholics; I learn that she is even thinking of conventual life. I know her spirit and temper well enough to be sure that, if she were to meet the child again which she believes lost, it would be with an impetuosity of feeling and a devotion that would absorb every aim of her life. This disclosure is the only one by which I could hope to win her to any consideration of marriage; and with a mother's rights and a mother's love, would she not sweep away all that Protestant faith which you, for so many years, have been laboring to build up in the mind of my child? Whatever you may think, I do not conceive this to be impossible; and if possible, is it to be avoided at all hazards? Whatever I might have owed to the mother I feel in a measure absolved from by her rejection of all present advances. And inasmuch as I am making you my father confessor, I may as well tell you, my dear Johns, that no particular self-denial would be involved in a marriage with Mademoiselle Chalet. For myself, I am past the age of sentiment; my fortune is now established; neither myself nor my child can want for any luxury. The mother, by her present associations and by the propriety of her life, is above all suspicion; and her air

and bearing are such as would be a passport to friendly association with refined people here or elsewhere. You may count this a failure of Providence to fix its punishment upon transgressors: I count it only one of those accidents of life which are all the while surprising us.

"There was a time when I would have had ambition to do otherwise; but now, with my love for Adèle established by my intercourse with her and by her letters, I have no other aim, if I know my own heart, than her welfare. It should be kept in mind, I think, that the marriage spoken of, if it ever take place, will probably involve, sooner or later, a full exposure to Adèle of all the circumstances of her birth and history. I say this will be involved, because I am sure that the warm affections of Mademoiselle Chalet will never allow of the concealment of her maternal relations, and that her present religious perversity (if you will excuse the word) will not admit of further deceits. I tremble to think of the possible consequences to Adèle, and query very much in my own mind, if her present blissful ignorance be not better than reunion with a mother through whom she must learn of the ignominy of her birth. Of Adèle's fortitude to bear such a shock, and to maintain any elasticity of spirits under it, you can judge better than I.

"I propose to delay action, my dear Johns, and of course my sailing for America, until I shall hear from you."

Our readers can surely anticipate the tone of the Doctor's reply. He writes: —

"Duty, Maverick, is always duty. The issues we must leave in the hands of Providence. One sin makes a crowd of entanglements; it is never weary of disguises and deceits. We must come out from them all, if we would aim at purity. From my heart's core I shall feel whatever shock may come to poor, innocent Adèle by reason of the light that may be thrown upon her history; but if it be a light that flows from the performance of Christian duty, I shall never fear its revelations. If we had been always true, such dark corners would never have existed to fright us with their goblins of terror. It is never too late, Maverick, to begin to be true.

"I find a strange comfort, too, in what you tell me of that religious perversity of Mademoiselle Chalet which so chafes you. I have never ceased to believe that most of the Romish traditions are of the Devil; but with waning years I have learned that the Divine mysteries are beyond our comprehension, and that we cannot map out His purposes by any human chart. The pure faith of your child, joined to her buoyant

elasticity, — I freely confess it, — has smoothed away the harshness of many opinions I once held.

"Maverick, do your duty. Leave the rest to Heaven."

LIII.

REUBEN, meantime, is leading a dashing life in the city. The Brindlock family have taken him to their arms again as freely and heartily as if he had never entered the fold over which the good Doctor exercised pastoral care, and as if he had never strayed from it again.

"I told you 't would be all right, Mabel," said Mr. Brindlock to his wife; and neither of them ever rallied him upon his bootless experience in that direction.

But the kindly aunt had not forborne (how could she?) certain pertinent inquiries in regard to the pretty Miss Maverick, under which Reuben had shown considerable disposition to flinch; although he vainly fancied that he stood the interrogation with a high hand. Mrs. Brindlock drew her own conclusions, but was not greatly disturbed by them. Why should she be, indeed? Reuben, with his present most promising establishment in business, and with a face and air that insured him a cordial welcome in that circle of wealthy acquaintances which Mrs. Brindlock especially cultivated, was counted a *bon parti*, independent of his posi-

tion as presumptive heir to a large share of the Brindlock estate.

Once or twice since his leave of Ashfield he has astonished the good people there by a dashing visit. Perhaps he has enjoyed (such things are sometimes enjoyed) setting forth before the quiet parishioners of his father his new consequence as a man of the world and of large moneyed prospects. It is even possible that he may have entertained agreeably the fancy of dazing the eyes of both Rose and Adèle with the glitter of his city distinctions. But their admiration, if they felt any, was not flatteringly expressed. Adèle, indeed, was always graciously kind, and, seeing his confirmed godlessness, tortured herself secretly with the thought that, but for her rebuff, he might have made a better fight against the bedevilments of the world, and lived a truer and purer life. All that, however, was irrevocably past. As for Rose, if there crept into her little prayers a touch of sentiment as she pleaded for the backslidden son of the minister, her prayers were none the worse for it. Such trace of sentimental color — like the blush upon her fair cheek — gave a completed beauty to her appeals.

Reuben saw that Phil was terribly in earnest in his love, and he fancied, with some twinges, that he saw indications on the part of Adèle of its being not wholly unacceptable. Rose, too, seemed not disinclined to

receive the assiduous attentions of the young minister, who had become a frequent visitor in the Elderkin household, and who preached with an unction and an earnestness that touched her heart, and that made her sigh despondingly over the outcast son of the old pastor. Watching these things with a look studiedly careless and indifferent, Reuben felt himself cut off more than ever from such charms or virtues as might possibly have belonged to continued association with the companions of his boyhood, and nerved himself for a new and firmer grip upon those pleasures of the outer world which had not yet proved an illusion. There were moments — mostly drifting over him in silent night-hours, within his old chamber at the parsonage — when it seemed to him that he had made a losing game of it. The sparkling eyes of Adèle, suffused with tears, — as in that memorable interview of the garden, — beam upon him, promising, as then, other guidance; they gain new brilliance, and wear stronger entreaty, as they shine lovingly upon him from the distance — growing greater and greater — which now lies between them. Her beauty, her grace, her tenderness, now that they are utterly beyond reach, are tenfold enticing; and in that other sphere to which, in his night reverie, they seem translated, the joyous face of Rose, like that of an attendant angel, looks down regretfully, full of a capacity for love to which he must be a stranger.

He is wakened by the bells next morning, — a Sunday morning, may be. There they go, — he sees them from the window, — the two comely damsels, picking their way through the light, fresh-fallen snow of March. Going possibly to teach the catechism; he sneers at this thought, for he is awake now. Has the world no richer gift in store for him? That Sophia Bowrigg is a great fortune, a superb dancer, a gorgeous armful of a woman. What if they were to join their fortunes and come back some day to dazzle these quiet townsfolk with the splendor of their life? His visits in Ashfield grow shorter and more rare. There is nothing particularly alluring. We shall not meet him there again until we meet him for the last time.

Mr. Catesby is an "acceptable preacher." He unfolds the orthodox doctrines with more grace than had belonged to the manner of the Doctor, and illustrates them from time to time with a certain youthful glow, and touches of passionate exhortation, which for many years the Ashfield pulpit had not known. The old ladies befriend him and pet him in their kindly way; and if at times his speculative humor (which he is not wholly without) leads him beyond the bounds of the accepted doctrines, he compounds the matter by strong assertion of those sturdy generalities which lie at the bottom of the orthodox creed.

But his self-control is not so apparent in his social

intercourse; and before he has been three months in Ashfield, he has given tongue to gossip, and all the old ladies comment upon his enslavement to the pretty Rose Elderkin. And they talk by the book; he is desperately enamored. Young clergymen have this way of falling, at sight, into the toils, which is vastly refreshing to middle-aged observers. But we have no occasion to detail his experience. An incident only of his recreative pursuits in this direction belongs to our narrative.

Upon one of the botanical excursions of later spring which he had inaugurated, and to which the maidenly modesty of Rose had suggested that Adèle should make a party, the young Catesby (who was a native of Eastern Massachusetts) had asked in his *naïve* manner after her family connections. An uncle of his had known a Mr. Maverick, who had long been a resident of Europe.

"It may possibly be some relation of yours, Miss Maverick," said the young minister.

"Do you recall the first name?" said Rose.

Mr. Catesby hesitated in that interesting way in which lovers are wont to hesitate. No, he did not remember; but he was a jovial, generous-hearted man, (he had heard his uncle often describe him,) who must be now some fifty or sixty years old. — "Frank Maverick, to be sure; I have the name."

"Why, it is my father," said Adèle with a swift, happy rush of color to her face.

"Oh no, Miss Maverick," said the young Catesby with a smile, "that is quite impossible. The gentleman of whom I speak, and my uncle visited him only three years ago, is a confirmed bachelor, and he had rallied him, I remember, upon never having married."

The color left the cheeks of Adèle.

"Frank, did you say?" persisted Rose.

"Frank was the name," said the innocent young clergyman; "and he was a merchant, if I remember rightly, somewhere upon the Mediterranean."

"It 's very strange," said Rose, turning to Adèle.

And Adèle, all her color gone, had the fortitude to pat Rose lovingly upon the shoulder, and to say, with a forced smile, "Life is very strange, Rose."

But from this time till they reached home, — fortunately not far away, — Adèle said nothing more. Rose remarked an unwonted pallor in her cheeks.

"You are tired, Adèle," said she; "you are so pale!"

"Child," said Adèle, tapping her again, in a womanly way that was strange to her companion, "you have color for us both."

At this, her reserve of dignity and fortitude being now well-nigh spent, she rushed away to her chamber. What wonder if she sought the little crucifix, sole

memento of the unknown mother, and glued it to her lips, as she fell upon her knees by the bedside, and uttered such a prayer for help and strength as she had never uttered before?

"It is true! it is true! I see it now. The child of shame! The child of shame! O my father, my father! what wrong have you done me!" And again she prays for help and strength.

There is not a doubt in her mind where the truth lies. In a moment her thought has flashed over the whole chain of evidence. The father's studied silence; her alienation from any home of her own; the mysterious hints of the Doctor; and the strange communication of Reuben, — all come up in stately array and confound her with the bitter truth. There is a little miniature of her father which she has kept among her choicest treasures. She seeks it now. Is it to throw it away in scorn? No, no, no. Our affections are after all not submissible to strict moral regimen. It is with set teeth and a hard look in her eye that she regards it at first; then her eyes suffuse with tears while she looks, and she kisses it passionately again and again.

"Can there be some horrible mistake in all this?" she asks herself. At the thought she slips on hat and shawl and glides noiselessly down the stairs, (not for the world would she have been interrupted!) and walks swiftly away to her old home at the parsonage.

Dame Tourtelot meets her and says, " Good evening, Miss Adeel."

And Adèle, in a voice so firm that it does not seem her own, says, " Good evening, Mrs. Tourtelot." She wonders greatly at her own calmness.

LIV.

THE Doctor is alone in his study when Adèle comes in upon him, and she has reached his chair and dropped upon her knees beside him before he has time to rise.

"New Papa, you have been so kind to me! I know the truth now, — the mystery, the shame;" — and she dropped her head upon his knees.

"Adaly, Adaly, my dear child!" said the old man with a great tremor in his voice, "what does this mean?"

She was sobbing, sobbing.

"Adaly, my child, what can I do for you?"

"Pray for me, New Papa!" and she lifted her eyes upon him with a tender, appealing look.

"Always, always, Adaly!"

"Tell me, New Papa, — tell me honestly, — is it not true that I can call no one mother, — that I never could?"

The Doctor trembled: he would have given ten years of his life to have been able to challenge her story, to disabuse her mind of the belief which he saw

was fastened past all recall. "Adaly," said he, "Christ befriended the Magdalen, — how much more you, then, if so be you are the unoffending child of" —

"I knew it! I knew it!" and she fell to sobbing again upon the knee of the old gentleman, in a wild, passionate way.

In such supreme moments the mind reaches its decisions with electrical rapidity. Even as she leaned there, her thought flashed upon that poor Madame Arles who had so befriended her, — against whom they had cautioned her, who had shown such intense emotion at their first meeting, who had summoned her at the last, and who had died with that wailing cry, "*Ma fille!*" upon her lip. Yes, yes, her mother indeed, who died in her arms! (she can never forget that death-clasp.)

She hints as much to the Doctor, who, in view of his recent communication from Maverick, will not gainsay her.

When she moved away at last, as if for a leave-taking, silent and humiliated, the old man said to her, "My child, are you not still my Adaly? God is no respecter of persons; his ministers should be like him."

Whereupon Adèle came and kissed him with a warmth that reminded him of days long past.

She rejoiced in not having encountered the gray, keen eyes of the spinster. She knew they would read unfailingly the whole extent of the revelation that had

dawned upon her. That the spinster herself knew the truth, and had long known it, she was sure; and she recalled with a shudder the look of those uncanny eyes upon the evening of their little frolic at the Elderkins'. She dreaded the thought of ever meeting them again, and still more the thought of listening to the stiff, cold words of consolation which she knew she would count it her duty to administer.

It was dusk when she left the Doctor's door; he would have attended, but she begged to be alone. It was an April evening, the chilliness of the earth just yielding to the coming summer; the frogs clamorous in all the near pools, and filling the air with the harsh uproar of their voices; the delicate grass-blades were just thrusting their tips through the brown web of the old year's growth, and in sunny, close-trodden spots showing a mat of green; while the fleecy brown blossoms of the elm were tufting all the spray of the embowering trees. Here and there a village loiterer greeted her kindly. They all knew Miss Adèle. "They will all know it to-morrow," she thought, "and then — then" —

With a swift but unsteady step she makes her way to the little grave-yard; she had gone there often, and there were those who said wantonly that she went to say her prayers before the little cross upon the tombstone she had placed over the grave of Madame Arles.

Now she threw herself prone upon the little hillock, with a low, sharp cry of distress, like that of a wounded bird, — "My mother! my mother!"

Every word, every look of tenderness which the dead woman had lavished, she recalls now with a terrible distinctness. Those loud, vague appeals of her delirium come to her recollection with a meaning in them that is only too plain; and then the tight, passionate clasp, when, strained to her bosom, relief came at last. Adèle lies there unconscious of the time, until the night dews warn her away; she staggers through the gate. Where next? She fancies they must know it all at the Elderkins', — that she has no right there. Is she not an estray upon the world? Shall she not — as well first as last — wander forth, homeless as she is, into the night? And true to these despairing thoughts, she hurries away farther and farther from the town. The frogs croak monotonously in all the marshes, as if in mockery of her grief. On some near tree an owl is hooting, with a voice that is strangely and pitifully human. Presently an outlying farm-house shows its cheery, hospitable light through the window-panes, and she is tempted to shorten her steps and steal a look into the room where the family sits grouped around the firelight. No such sanctuary for her ever was or ever can be. Even the lowing of a cow in the yard, and the answering bleat of a calf within the barn, seem to mock the outcast.

On she passes, scarce knowing whither her hurrying steps are bearing her, until at last she spies a low building in the fields away upon her right, which she knows. It is the home of that outlawed woman where Madame Arles had died. Here at least she will be met with sympathy, even if the truth were wholly known; and yet perhaps last of all places would she have it known there. She taps at the door; she has wandered out of her way, and asks for a moment's rest. The little boy of the house, when he has made out the visitor by a few furtive peeps from behind the mother's chair, comes to her fawningly and familiarly; and as Adèle looks into his bright, fearless eyes, a new courage seems to possess her. God's children, all of us; and He careth even for the sparrows. She will conquer her despairing weakness; she will accept her cross and bear it resolutely. By slow degrees she is won over by the frolicsome humor of the curly-pated boy, who never once quits her side, into cheerful prattle with him. And when at last, fairly rested, she would set off on her return, the lone woman says she will see her safely as far as the village street; the boy, too, insists doggedly upon attending them; and so, with her hand tightly clasped in the hand of the lad, Adèle makes her way back into the town. Along the street she passes, even under the windows of the parsonage, with her hand still locked in that of the outlawed boy;

and she wonders if in broad day the same courage would be meted to her? They only part when within sight of the broad glow of light from the Elderkin windows; and here Adèle, taking out her purse, counts out the half of her money and places it in the hands of the boy.

"We will share and share alike, Arthur," said she. "But never tell who gave you this."

"But, Miss Maverick, it 's too much," said the woman.

"No, it 's not," said the boy, clutching it eagerly.

With a parting good-night, Adèle darted within the gate, and opened softly the door, determined to meet courageously whatever rebuffs might be in store for her.

LV.

ROSE has detailed the story of the occurrence, with the innocent curiosity of girlhood, to the Squire and Mrs. Elderkin (Phil being just now away). The Squire, as he hears it, has passed a significant look across to Mrs. Elderkin.

"It 's very queer, is n't it?" asked Rose.

"Very," said the Squire, who had for some time cherished suspicions of certain awkward relations existing between Maverick and the mother of Adèle, but never so decided as this story would seem to warrant. "And what said Adèle?" continued he.

"It disturbed her, I think, papa; she did n't seem at all herself."

"Rose, my dear," said the kindly old gentleman, "there is some unlucky family difference between Mr. and Mrs. Maverick, and I dare say the talk was unpleasant to Adèle; if I were you, I would n't allude to it again; don't mention it, please, Rose."

If it could be possible, good Mrs. Elderkin greeted Adèle as she came in more warmly than ever. "You must be careful, my dear, of these first spring days of ours; you are late to-night."

"Yes," says Adèle, "I was gone longer than I thought. I rambled off to the churchyard, and I have been at the Doctor's."

Again the old people exchanged glances.

Why does she find herself watching their looks so curiously? Yet there is nothing but kindness in them. She is glad Phil is not there.

The next morning the Squire stepped over at an early hour to the parsonage, and by an adroit question or two, which the good Doctor had neither the art nor the disposition to evade, unriddled the whole truth with respect to the parentage of Adèle. The Doctor also advised him of the delusion of the poor girl with respect to Madame Arles, and how he had considered it unwise to attempt any explanation until he should hear further from Mr. Maverick, whose recent letter he counted it his duty to lay before Mr. Elderkin.

"It 's a sad business," said he.

And the Doctor, — "*The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble.*"

The Squire walks home in a brown study. Like all the rest, he has been charmed with the liveliness and grace of Adèle; over and over he has said to his boy, "How fares it, Phil? Why, at your age, my boy, I should have had her in the toils long ago."

Since her domestication under his own roof, the old gentleman's liking for her had grown tenfold

strong; he had familiarized himself with the idea of counting her one of his own flock. But, the child of a French —

"Well, well, we will see what the old lady may say," reflected he. And he took the first private occasion to lay the matter before Mrs. Elderkin.

"Well, mother, the suspicions of last night are all true, — true as a book."

"God help the poor child, then!" said Madam, holding up her hands.

"Of course He 'll do that, wife. But what say you to Phil's marriage now? Does it look as tempting as it did?"

The old lady reflected a moment, lifting her hand to smooth the hair upon her temple, as if in aid of her thought, then said, — "Giles, you know the world better than I; you know best what may be well for the boy. I love Adèle very much; I do not believe that I should love her any less if she were the wife of Phil. But you know best, Giles; you must decide."

"There 's a good woman!" said the Squire; and he stayed his pace up and down the room to lay his hand approvingly upon the head of the old lady, touching as tenderly those gray locks as ever he had done in earlier years the ripples of golden brown.

In a few days Phil returns, — blithe, hopeful, winsome as ever. He is puzzled, however, by the grave

manner of the Squire, when he takes him aside, after the first hearty greetings, and says, "Phil, my lad, how fares it with the love-matter? Have things come to a crisis, — eh?"

"What do you mean, father?" and Phil blushes like a boy of ten.

"I mean to ask, Philip," said the old gentleman, measuredly, "if you have made any positive declaration to Miss Maverick."

"Not yet," said Phil, with a modest frankness.

"Very good, my son, very good. And now, Phil, I would wait a little, — take time for reflection; don't do any thing rashly. It 's an important step to take."

"But, father," says Phil, puzzled by the old gentleman's manner, "what does this mean?"

"Philip," said the Squire, with a seriousness that seemed almost comical by its excess, "would you really marry Adèle?"

"To-morrow, if I could," said Phil.

"Tut, tut, Phil! It 's the old hot blood in him!" (He says this, as if to himself.) "Philip, I would n't do so, my boy."

And thereupon he gives him in his way a story of the revelations of the last few days.

At the first, Phil is disposed to an indignant denial, as if by no possibility any indignity could attach to the name or associations of Adèle. But in the whirl of

his feeling he remembered that interview with Reuben, and his boast that Phil could not affront the conventionalities of the world. It confirmed the truth to him in a moment. Reuben then had known the whole, and had been disinterestedly generous. Should he be any less so?

"Well, father," said Phil, after a minute or two of silence, "I don't think the story changes my mind one whit. I would marry her to-morrow, if I could," and he looked the Squire fairly and squarely in the face.

"Gad, boy," said the old gentleman, "you must love her as I loved your mother!"

"I hope I do," said Phil, — "that is if I win her. I don't think she 's to be had for the asking."

"Aha! the pinch lies there, eh?" said the Squire, and he said it in better humor than he would have said it ten days before. "What 's the trouble, Philip?"

"Well, sir, I think she always had a tenderness for Reuben; I think she loves him now in her heart."

"So, so! The wind lies there, eh? Well, let it bide, my boy; let it bide awhile. We shall know something more of the matter soon."

And there the discourse of the Squire ended.

Meantime, however, Rose and Adèle are having a little private interview above stairs, which in its subject-matter is not wholly unrelated to the same theme.

"Rose," Adèle had said, as she fondled her in her winning way, "your brother Phil has been very kind to me."

"He always meant to be," said Rose, with a charming glow upon her face.

"He always *has* been," said Adèle; "but, dear Rose, I know I can talk as plainly to you as to another self almost."

"You can, — you can, Ady," said she.

"I have thought," continued Adèle, "though I know it is very unmaidenly in me to say it, that Phil was disposed sometimes to talk even more warmly than he has ever talked, and to ask me to be a nearer friend to him even than you, dear Rose. May be it is only my own vanity that leads me sometimes to suspect this."

"Oh, I hope it may be true!" burst forth Rose.

"I hope *not*," said Adèle, with a voice so gravely earnest that Rose shuddered.

"O Ady, you don't mean it! you who are so good, so kind! Phil's heart will break."

"I don't think that," said Adèle, with a faint hard smile, in which her womanly vanity struggled with her resolution. "And whatever might have been, that which I have hinted at *must* not be now, dear Rose. You will know some day why — why it would be ungrateful in me to determine otherwise. Promise me, darling, that you will discourage any inclination toward

it, wherever you can best do so. Promise me, dear Rose!"

"Do you really, truly mean it?" said the other, with a disappointment she but poorly concealed.

"With all my heart, I do," said Adèle.

And Rose promised, while she threw herself upon the neck of Adèle and said, "I am so sorry! It will be such a blow to poor Phil!"

After this, things went on very much in their old way. To the great relief of Adèle there was no explosive village demonstration of the news which had come home so cruelly to herself. The Doctor had given an admonition to the young minister, and the old Squire had told him, in a pointed and confidential way, that he had heard of his inquiries and assertions with respect to Mr. Maverick, and begged to hint that the relations between the father and mother of Adèle were not of the happiest, and it was quite possible that Mr. Maverick had assumed latterly the name of a bachelor; it was not, however, a very profitable subject of speculation or of gossip, and if he valued the favor of the young ladies he would forbear all allusion to it. A suggestion which Mr. Catesby was not slow to accept religiously, and scrupulously to bear in mind.

Phil was as hot a lover as ever, though for a time a little more distant: and the poor fellow remarked a new timidity and reserve about Adèle, which, so far

from abating, only fed the flame; and there is no knowing to what reach it might have blazed out, if a trifling little circumstance had not paralyzed his zeal.

From time to time, Phil had been used to bring home a rare flower or two as a gift for Adèle, which Rose had always lovingly arranged in some coquettish fashion, either upon the bosom or in the hair of Adèle; but a new and late gift of this kind — a little tuft of the trailing arbutus which he has clambered over miles of woodland to secure — is not worn by Adèle, but by Rose, who glances into the astounded face of Phil with a pretty, demure look of penitence.

"I say, Rose," says he, seizing his chance for a private word, — "that 's not for you."

"I know it, Phil; Adèle gave it to me."

"And that 's her favorite flower."

"Yes, Phil," and there is a shake in her voice now. "I think she 's grown tired of such gifts, Phil;" — whereat she glances keenly and pitifully at him.

"*Truly*, Rose?" says Phil, with the color on a sudden quitting his cheeks.

"Truly, — truly, Phil," — and in spite of herself the pretty hazel eyes are brimming full, and, under pretence of some household duty, she dashes away. For a moment Phil stands confounded. Then, through his set teeth, he growls, "I was a fool not to have known it!"

But Phil was not a fool, but a sturdy, brave-hearted fellow, who bore whatever blows fortune gave him, or seemed to give, with a courage that had a fine elastic temper in it. He may have made his business engagements at the river or in the city a little more frequent and prolonged after this; but always there was the same deferential show of tender feeling toward his father's guest, whenever he happened in Ashfield. Indeed, he felt immensely comforted by a little report which Rose made to him in her most despairing manner. Adèle had told her that she "would never, never marry."

There are a great many mothers of fine families who have made such a speech at twenty or thereabout; and Phil knew it.

LVI.

WE by no means intend to represent our friend Adèle as altogether a saint. Such creatures are very rare, and not always the most lovable, according to our poor human ways of thinking; but she may possibly grow into saintship, in view of a certain sturdy religious sense of duty that belongs to her, and a faith that is always glowing. At present she is a high-spirited, sensitive girl, — not without her pride and her lesser vanities, not without an immense capacity for loving and being loved, but just now trembling under that shock to her sensibilities which we have detailed, — but never fainting, never despairing. Not even relinquishing her pride, but guarding it with triple defenses, by her reserve in respect to Phil, as well as by a certain new dignity of manner which has grown out of her conflict with the opprobrium that seems to threaten, for no fault of her own.

Adèle sees clearly now the full burden of Reuben's proposal to cherish and guard her against whatever indignities might threaten; she sees more clearly than ever the rich, impulsive generosity of his nature re-

flected, and it disturbs her grievously to think that she had met it only with reproach. The thought of the mad, wild, godless career upon which he may have entered, and of which the village gossips are full, is hardly more afflictive to her than her recollection of that frank, self-sacrificing generosity, so ignobly requited. She longs in her heart to clear the debt, — to tell him what grateful sense she has of his intended kindness. But how? Should she, — being what she is, — even by a word, seem to invite a return of that devotion which may be was but the passion of an hour, and which it were fatal to renew? Her pride revolts at this. And yet — and yet — so brave a generosity shall not be wholly unacknowledged. She writes: —

"Reuben, I know now the full weight of the favor of what you promised to bestow upon me when I so blindly reproached you with intrusion upon my private griefs. Forgive me, Reuben! I thank you now, late as it is, with my whole heart. It is needless to tell you how I came to know what, perhaps, I had better never have known, but which must always have overhung me as a dark cloud charged with a blasting fate. This knowledge, dear Reuben, which separates us so surely and so widely, relieves me of the embarrassment which I might otherwise have felt in telling you of my lasting gratitude, and (if as a sister I may say it) my love. If your kind heart could so overflow with pity then, you

will surely pity me the more now; yet not *too much*, Reuben, for my pride as a woman is as strong as ever. The world was made for me, as much as it was made for others; and if I bear its blight, I will find some flowers yet to cherish. I do not count it altogether so grim and odious a world, — even under the broken light which shines upon it for me, — as in your last visits you seemed disposed to reckon it.

"And this reminds me, Reuben, that I have told you frankly how the cloud which overhung me has opened with a terrible surety. How is it with the cloud that lay upon you? Is there any light? Ah, Reuben, when I recall those days in which long ago your faith in something better beyond this world than lies in it seemed to be so much stronger and firmer than mine, and when your trust was so confident as to make mine stronger, it seems like a strange dream to me, — all the more when now you, who should reason more justly than I, believe in 'nothing,' (was not that your last word?) — and yet, dear Reuben, I cling, — I cling, Do you remember the old hymn I sung in those days: —

'Ingemisco tanquam reus,
Culpa rubet vultus meus;
Supplicanti parce, Deus.'

Even the old Doctor, who was so troubled by the Romish hymns, said it must have been written by a good man."

Much more she writes in this vein, but returns ever and again to that noble generosity of his, — her delicacy struggling throughout with her tender gratitude, — yet she fails not to show a deep, earnest undercurrent of affection, which surely might develop under sympathy into a very fever of love. Will it not touch the heart of Reuben? Will it not divert him from the trail where he wanders blindly? If we have read his character rightly, surely this letter, in which a delicate sensibility hardly veils a great passionate wealth of feeling, will stir him to a new and more hopeful venture.

God send that the letter may reach him safely!

For a long time Adèle has not written to Reuben, and it occurs to her, as she strolls away toward the village post, that to mail it herself may possibly provoke new town gossip. In this perplexity she presently encounters her boy friend, Arthur, who for a handful of pennies, and under injunction of secrecy, cheerfully undertakes the duty. To the house of the lad's mother, far away as it was, Adèle had wandered frequently of late, and had borne away from time to time some trifling memento of the dead one whose memory so endeared the spot. It happens that she continues her stroll thither on this occasion; and the poor woman, toward whom Adèle's charities have flowed with a profusion that has astounded the Doctor,

repays some new gift by placing in her hands a little embroidered kerchief, "too fine for such as she," which had belonged to Madame Arles. A flimsy bit of muslin daintily embroidered; but there is a name stitched upon its corner, for which Adèle treasures it past all reckoning, — the name of *Julie Chalet.*

It was as if the dead one had suddenly come back and whispered it in her ear, — Julie Chalet. The spring birds sung the name in chorus as she walked home; and on the grave-stone, under the cross, she seemed to see it cut upon the marble, — Julie Chalet.

Adèle has written to her father, of course, in those days when the first shock of the new revelation had passed. How could she do otherwise? If she has poured out the bitterness of her grief and of her isolation, she has mercifully spared him any reproach!

"I think I now understand," she writes, "the reason of your long absence from me. Whatever other griefs I bear, I will not believe that it has been from lack of affection for me. I recall that day, dear papa, when, with my head lying on your bosom, you said to me, 'She is unworthy; I will love you for both.' You must! But was she, papa, so utterly unworthy? I think I have known her; nay, I feel almost sure, — sure that these arms held her in the moment when she breathed adieu to the world. If ever bad, I am sure that she must have grown into goodness. I cannot, I

will not, think otherwise. I can tell you so many of her kind deeds as will take away your condemnation. In this hope I live, dear papa.

"I have found her true name too, at last, — Julie Chalet, — is it not so? I wonder with what feeling you will read it; will it be with a wakened fondness? will it be with loathing? I tremble while I ask. You shall go with me (will you not?) *to her grave;* and there a kind Heaven will put in our hearts what memories are best.

"I know now the secret of your caution in respect to Reuben; you have been unwilling that *your child* should bring any possible shame to the household of a friend! Trust to me, — trust to *me*, papa, your sensitiveness cannot possibly be keener, if it be more generous, than my own. Yet I have never told you — what I have since learned — of the unselfish devotion of Reuben, which declared itself when he knew all, — all. Would I not be almost tempted to thank him with — myself? Yet, trust me, if I have written him with an almost unmaidenly warmth, I have called to his mind the great gulf that *must* lie between us.

"Is the old godmother, of whom you used to speak, still alive? It seems that I should love to hang about her neck in memory of days gone; it seems that I should love the warm sky under which I was born, — I am sure I should love the olive-orchards, and the vines,

and the light upon the sea. I feel as if I were living in chains now. When, when will you come to break them, and set me free?"

In those days of May, when the leaflets were unfolding, and when the downy bluebells were lifting their clustered blossoms filled with a mysterious fragrance, like the breath of young babes, Adèle loved to linger in the study of the parsonage; more than ever the good Doctor seemed a "New Papa," — more than ever his eye dwelt upon her with a parental smile. It was not that she loved Rose less, that she lingered here so long; but she could not shake off the conviction that some day soon Rose might shrink from her. The good Doctor never would. Nor can it be counted strange if there, in the study so familiar to her childhood, she should recall the days when she had frolicked down the orchard, when Reuben had gathered flowers for her, when life seemed enchanting. Was it enchanting now?

The Doctor was always gravely kind. "Have courage, Adaly, have courage!" he was wont to say; "God orders all things right."

And somehow, when she hears him say it, she believes it more than ever.

Ten days, a fortnight, and a month pass, and there is no acknowledgment from Reuben of her grateful letter. He does not count it worth his while, apparently, to break his long silence; or, possibly, he is too

much engrossed with livelier interests to give a thought to this episode of his old life in Ashfield. Adèle is disturbed by it; but the very disturbance gives her new courage to combat faithfully the difficulties of her position. "One cheering word I would have thought he might have given me," said she.

The appeal to her father, too, has no answer. Before it reaches its destination, Maverick has taken ship for America; and, singularly enough, it is fated that the letter of Adèle should be first opened and read — by her mother.

LVII.

SOME time in mid-May of this year Maverick writes: —

"My dear Johns, — I shall again greet you, God willing, in your own home, some forty days hence, and I shall come as a repentant Benedick; for I now wear the dignities of a married man. Your kind letter counted for a great deal toward my determination; but I will not affect to conceal from you, that my tender interest in the future of Adèle counted for a great deal more. As I had supposed, the communication to Julie (which I effected through her brother) that her child was still living, and living motherless, woke all the tenderness of her nature. I cannot say that the sudden change in her inclinations was any way flattering to me; but knowing her recent religious austerities, I was prepared for this. I shall not undertake to describe to you our first interview, which I can never forget. It belongs to those heart-secrets which cannot be spoken of; but this much I may tell you, — that, if there was no kindling of the old and wayward love, there grew out of it a respect for her present severity and eleva-

tion of character that I had never anticipated. At our age, indeed, (though, when I think of it, I must be many years your junior,) a respect for womanly character most legitimately takes the place of that disorderly sentiment which twenty years ago blazed out in passion.

"We have been married according to the rites of the Romish Church. If I had proposed other ceremony, more agreeable to your views, I am confident that she would not have listened to me. She is wrapped as steadfastly in her creed as ever you in yours. To do otherwise in so sacred a matter — and with her it wore solely that aspect — than as her Church commands, would have been to do foully and vainly. I had prepared you, I think, for her perversity in this matter; nor do I think that all your zeal and powers of persuasion could make her recreant to the faith for which she has immolated all the womanly vanities which certainly once belonged to her. Indeed, the only trace of worldliness which I see in her is her intense yearning toward our dear Adèle, and her passionate longing to clasp her child once more to her heart. Nor will I conceal from you that she hopes, with all the fervor of a mother's hope, to wean her from what she counts the heretical opinions under which she has been reared, and to bring her into the fold of the faithful.

"You will naturally ask, my dear Johns, why I do

not combat this; but I am too old and too far spent for a fight about creeds. I should have made a lame fight on that score at any day; but now my main concern, it would seem, should be to look out personally for the creed which has most of mercy in it. If I seem to speak triflingly, my dear Johns, I pray you excuse me; it is only my business way of stating the actual facts in the case. As for Madame Maverick, I am sure you will find no trifling in her (if you ever meet her); she is terribly in earnest. I tell her she would have made a magnificent lady prioress; whereat she thumbs her beads and whispers a Latin distich, as if she were exorcising a demon. Yet I should do wrong if I were to represent her as always severe, even upon such a theme; there certainly belongs to her a tender, appealing manner (reminding of Adèle in a way that brings tears to my eyes); but it is always bounded by allegiance to her sworn faith. You will think it an exaggeration, but she reminds me at times of those women of the New Testament (which I have not altogether forgotten) who gave up all for the following of the Master. If I were in your study, my dear Johns, you might ask me who those women were? And for my soul I could not tell you. Yet I have a vague recollection that there were those who showed a beautiful devotion to the Christian faith, that somehow sublimated their lives and memories. Again, I feel constrained to

put before you another feature in her character, which I am confident will make you feel kindly toward her; my home near to Marseilles, which has been but a gypsy home for so many years, she has taken under her hand, and by its new appointments and order has convicted me of the losses I have felt so long. True, you might object to the *oratoire;* but in all else I am confident you would approve, and in all else felicitate Adèle upon the home which was preparing for her.

"Madame Maverick will not sail with me for America; although the marriage, under French law, may have admitted Adèle to all rights and even social immunities, yet I have represented that another law and custom rules with you. Whatever opprobrium might attach to the mother, Julie, with her exalted religious sentiment, would not weigh for a moment; but as regards Adèle, she manifests a strange tenderness. To spare her any pang, or possibly pangs, she is content to wait. I have feared, too, I must confess, that any undue expression of condemnation or distrust might work revulsion of her own feeling. But while she assents — with some reluctance, I must admit — to this plan of deferring her meeting with Adèle, on whom all her affections seem to center, she insists, in a way that I find it difficult to combat, upon her child's speedy return. That her passionate love will insure entire devotion on the part of Adèle, I cannot doubt.

And how the anti-Romish faith which must have been instilled in the dear girl by your teachings, as well as by her associations, may withstand the earnest attack of Madame Maverick, I cannot tell. I have a fear it may lead to some dismal complications. You know what the earnestness of your own faith is; but I don't think you yet know the earnestness of an opposing faith, with a Frenchwoman to back it. Even as I write, she comes to cast a glance at my work, and says, 'Monsieur Maverick,' (she called me Frank once,) 'what are you saying there to the heretical Doctor?'

"Whereupon I translate for her ear a sentence or two. 'Tell him,' says she, 'that I thank him for his kindness; tell him besides, that I can in no way better atone for the guiltiness of the past, than by bringing back this wandering lamb into the true fold. Only when we kneel before the same altar, her hand in mine, can I feel that she is truly my child.'

"I fear greatly this zeal may prove infectious.

"And now, my dear Johns, in regard to the revelation to Adèle of what is written here, — of the whole truth, in short, for it must come out, — I have n't the heart or the courage to make it myself. I must now throw myself on your charity. For Heaven's sake, tell the story as kindly as you can. Don't let her think too harshly of me. See to it, I pray, that my name don't become a bugbear in the village. I have pretty

broad shoulders, and could bear it, if I only were to be sufferer; but I am sure 't would react fearfully on the sensibilities of poor Adèle. *That* sin is past cure and past preachment; no good can come from trumpeting wrath against it. Do me this favor, Johns, and you will find me a more willing listener in what is to come. I can't promise, indeed, to accept all your dogmas; there is a thick crust of the world on me, and I doubt if you could force them through it; but, for Adèle's sake, I think I could become a very orderly and presentable person, even for a New England meeting-house. I will make a beginning now by turning over the little property which you hold for Adèle, in trust, for disbursement in your parish charities. The dear child won't need it, and the parish may."

The Doctor was happy to be relieved of the worst part of the revelation; but he had yet to communicate the fact that the mother was still alive, and (what was to him worst of all) that she was imbruted with the delusions of the Romish Church. He chose his hour, and, meeting her upon the village street, asked her into his study.

"Adaly, your father is coming. He will be here within a month."

"At last! at last!" said she, with a cry of joy.

"But, Adaly," continued he, with great gravity, "I have perhaps led you into error. Your mother, Adaly, — your mother is still living."

"Living!" and an expression almost of radiance shot over the fair face. But in an instant it was gone. Was not the poor lady she had so religiously mourned over her mother? That death embrace and the tomb were, then, only solemn mockeries! With a frightful alertness her thought ran to them, — weighed them. "New Papa," said she, approaching him with a gravity that matched his own, "is this some new delusion? Is it true? Has he written me?"

"He has not written you, my child; but I have a letter, informing me of his marriage, and begging me to make the revelation to you as kindly as I might."

"Marriage! Marriage to whom?" says Adèle, her eyes flashing fire, and her lips showing a tempest of scarce controllable feeling.

"Marriage to your mother, Adaly. He would be just at last."

"O my God!" exclaimed Adèle, with a burst of tears. "It 's false! I shall never see my mother again in this world. I know it! I know it!"

"But, Adaly, my child, consider!" said the old gentleman.

Adèle did not heed him. She was lost in her own griefs. She could only exclaim, "O my father! my father!"

The old Doctor was greatly moved; he laid down his spectacles, and paced up and down the room. The

earnestness of her doubt made him almost believe that he was himself deceived.

"Can it be? can it be?" he muttered, half under breath, while Adèle sat drooping in her chair. "May be the instinct of the poor girl is right, after all," thought he, — "sin is so full of disguises."

At this moment there is a sharp tap at the door, and Miss Eliza steps in, the bearer of a letter from Reuben.

LVIII.

A LETTER from Reuben indeed has come; but not for Miss Adèle. The Doctor is glad of the relief its perusal will give him. Meantime Miss Eliza, in her stately, patronizing manner, and with a coolness that was worse than a sneer, says, "I hope you have pleasant news from your various friends abroad, Miss Maverick?"

Adèle lifted her eyes with a glitter in them that for a moment was almost serpent-like; then, as if regretting her show of vexation, and with an evasive reply, bowed her head again to brood over the strange suspicions that haunted her. Miss Johns, totally unmoved, — thinking all the grief but a righteous dispensation for the sin in which the poor child had been born, — next addressed the Doctor, who had run his eye with extraordinary eagerness through the letter of his son.

"What does Reuben say, Benjamin?"

"His 'idols,' again, Eliza; 't is always the 'flesh-pots of Egypt.'"

And the Doctor reads: "There is just now rare promise of a good venture in our trade at one of the

ports of Sicily, and we have freighted two ships for immediate dispatch. At the last moment our supercargo has failed us, and Brindlock has suggested that I go myself; it is short notice, as the ship is in the stream, and may sail to-morrow, but I rather fancy the idea, and have determined to go. I hope you will approve. Of course, I shall have no time to run up to Ashfield to say good-by. I shall try for a freight back from Naples, otherwise shall make some excuse to run across the Straits for a look at Vesuvius and the matters thereabout. St. Paul, you know, voyaged in those seas, which will interest you in my trip. I dare say I shall find where he landed: it 's not far from Naples, Mrs. Brindlock tells me. Give love to the people who ever ask about me in Ashfield. I enclose a check of five hundred dollars for parish contingencies till I come back; hoping to find you clean out of harness by that time." (The Doctor cannot for his life repress a little smile here.) "Tell Adèle I shall see her blue Mediterranean at last, and will bring her back an olive-leaf, if I find any growing within reach. Tell Phil I love him, and that he deserves all the good he will surely get in this world, or in any other. Ditto for Rose. Ditto for good old Mrs. Elderkin, whom I could almost kiss for the love she 's shown me. What high old romps have n't we had in her garden! Eh, Adèle? (I suppose you 'll show her this letter, father.)

"Good-by, again.

"N. B. We hope to make a cool thirty thousand out of this venture!"

Adèle had half roused herself at the hearing of her name, but the careless, jocular mention of it, (so it seemed at least,) in contrast with the warmer leave-taking of other friends, added a new pang to her distress. She wished, for a moment, that she had never written her letter of thanks. What if she wished — in that hour of terrible suspicion and of vain search after any object upon which her future happiness might rest — that she had never been born? Many a one has given hearty utterance to that wish with less cause. Many a one of those just tottering into childhood will live to give utterance to the same. But the great wheel of fate turns ever relentlessly on. It drags us up from the nether mysterious depths; we sport and struggle and writhe and rejoice, as it bears us into the flashing blaze of life's meridian; then, with awful surety, it hurries us down, drags us under, once more into the abysses of silence and of mystery. Happy he who reads such promise as he passes in the lights fixed forever on the infinite depths above, that the silence and the mystery shall be as welcome as sleep to the tired worker!

"It will be of service to Reuben, I think, Benjamin," said Aunt Eliza; "I quite approve," — and slipped away noiselessly.

The Doctor was still musing, — the letter in his hand, — when Adèle rose, and, approaching him, said in her gentlest way, "It 's a great grief to you, New Papa, I know it is, but 'God orders all things well,' — except for me."

"Adaly! my child, I am shocked!"

She had roused the preacher in him unwittingly.

"I can't listen now," said she, impatiently; "and tell me, — you must, — did papa give you the name of this — new person he is to marry?"

"Yes, Adaly, yes," but he has forgotten it; and, searching for the previous letter, he presently finds it, and sets it before her, — "Mademoiselle Chalet."

"Chalet!" screams she. "There is some horrible mistake, New Papa. More than ever I am in the dark, — in the dark!" And with a hasty adieu she rushed away, taking her course straight for the house of that outlawed woman, with whom now, more than ever, she must have so many sympathies in common. Her present object, however, was to learn if any more definite evidence could be found that the deceased lady — mother still, in her thought — bore the name of Chalet. She found the evidence. One or two little books (devotional books they prove to be), which the mistress of the house had thrown by as valueless, were brought out, upon the fly-leaves of which the keen eyes of Adèle detected the name, — crossed and recrossed in-

deed, as if the poor woman would have destroyed all traces of her identity, — but still showing when held to the light a portion of the name she so cherished in her heart, — Chalet.

Adèle was more than ever incensed at thought of the delusion or the deception of her father. But, by degrees, her indignation yielded to her affection. He was himself to come, he would make it clear; this new mother — whom she was sure she should not love — was to remain; the Doctor had told her this much. She was glad of it. Yet she found in that fact a new proof that this person could not be her true mother. *She* would have rushed to her arms; no fear of idle tongues could have kept her back. And though she yearned for the time when she should be clasped once more in her father's arms, she dreaded the thought of crossing the seas with him upon such empty pilgrimage. She half wished for some excuse to detain her here, — some fast anchor by which her love might cling, within reach of that grave where her holier affections had centered.

This wish was confirmed by the more cordial manner in which she was received by the Elderkins, and, indeed, by the whole village, so soon as the Doctor had made known the fact — as he did upon the earliest occasion — that Mr. Maverick was speedily to come for Adèle, and to restore her to the embraces of a mother whom she had not seen for years.

Even the spinster, at the parsonage, was disposed to credit something to the rigid legal aspects which the affair was taking, and to find in them a shelter for her wounded dignities. Nor did she share the inquietude of the Doctor at thought of the new and terrible religious influences to which Adèle must presently be exposed; under her rigid regard, this environment of the poor victim with all the subtlest influences of the Babylonish Church was but a proper and orderly retribution under Providence for family sins and the old spurning of the law. 'T was right, in her exalted view, that she should struggle and agonize and wrestle with Satan for much time to come, before she should fully cleanse her bedraggled skirts of all taint of heathenism, and stand upon the high plane with herself, among the elect.

"It is satisfactory to reflect, Benjamin," said she, "that during her residence with us the poor girl has been imbued with right principles; at least I trust so."

And as she spoke, the exemplary old lady plucked a little waif of down from her bombazine dress, and snapped it away jauntily upon the air, — even as throughout her life, she had snapped from her the temptations of the world. And when, in his Scripture reading that very night, the Doctor came upon the passage, "*Woe unto you, Pharisees!*" the mind of the spinster was cheerfully intent upon the wretched sinners of Judea.

LIX.

THE news of Maverick's prospective arrival, and the comments of the good Doctor, — as we have said, — shed a new light upon the position of Adèle. Old Squire Elderkin, with a fatherly interest, was not unaffected by it; indeed, the Doctor had been communicative with him to a degree that had enlisted very warmly the old gentleman's sympathies.

"Better late than never, Doctor," had been his comment; and he had thought it worth his while to drop a hint or two in the ear of Phil.

"I say, Phil, my boy, I gave you a word of caution not long ago in regard to — to Miss Maverick. There were some bad stories afloat, my boy; but they are cleared up, — quite cleared up, Phil."

"I 'm glad of it, sir," says Phil.

"So am I, — so am I, my boy. She 's a fine girl, Phil, eh?"

"I think she is, sir."

"The deuce you do! Well, and what then?"

Phil blushed, but the smile that came on his face was not a hearty one.

"Well, Phil?"

"I said she was a fine girl, sir," said he, measuredly.

"But she 's an uncommon fine girl, Phil, eh?"

"I think she is, sir."

"Well?"

Phil was twirling his hat in an abstracted way between his knees. "I don't think she 's to be won very easily," said he at last.

"Nonsense, Phil! Faint heart never won. Make a bold push for it, my boy. The best birds drop at a quick shot."

"Do they?" said Phil, with a smile of incredulity that the old gentleman did not comprehend.

He found, indeed, a much larger measure of hope in a little hint that was let fall by Rose two days after. "I would n't despair if I were you, Phil," she had whispered in his ear.

Ah, those quiet, tender, sisterly words of encouragement, of cheer, of hope! Blest is the man who can enjoy them! and accursed must he be who scorns them, or who can never win them.

Phil, indeed, had never given over most devoted and respectful attentions to Adèle; but he had shown them latterly with a subdued and half-distrustful air, which Adèle with her keen insight had not been slow to understand. Trust a woman for fathoming all the shades of doubt which overhang the addresses of a lover!

Yet it was not easy for Phil, or indeed for any other, to understand or explain the manner of Adèle at this time. Elated she certainly was in the highest degree at the thought of meeting and welcoming her father; and there was an exuberance in her spirits when she talked of it, that seemed almost unnatural; but the coming shadow of the new mother whom she was bound to welcome dampened all. The Doctor indeed had warned her against the Romish prejudices of this newly found relative, and had entreated her to cling by the faith in which she had been reared; but it was no fear of any such conflict that oppressed her; — creeds all vanished under the blaze of that natural affection which craved a motherly embrace and which foresaw only falsity.

What wonder if her thought ran back, in its craving, to the days long gone, — to the land where the olive grew upon the hills, and the sunshine lay upon the sea, — where an old godmother, with withered hands clasped and raised, lifted up her voice at nightfall and chanted, —

"O sanctissima,
O piissima,
Dulcis virgo Maria,
Mater amata,
Intemerata,
Ora, ora, pro nobis!"

The Doctor would have been shocked had he heard the words tripping from the tongue of Adèle; yet, for

her, they had no meaning save as expressive of a deep yearning for motherly guidance and motherly affection.

Mrs. Elderkin, with her kindly instinct, had seen the perplexity of Adèle, and had said to her one day, "Ady, my dear, is the thought not grateful to you that you will meet your mother once more, and be clasped in her arms?"

"If I could, — if I could!" said Adèle, with a burst of tears.

"But you will, my child, you will. The Doctor has shown us the letters of your father. Nothing can be clearer. Even now she must be longing to greet you."

"Why does she not come, then?" — with a tone that was almost taunting.

"But, Adèle, my dear, there may be reasons of which you do not know or which you could not understand."

"I could, — I do!" said Adèle, with spirit mastering her grief. "'T is not my mother, my true mother; she is in the grave-yard; I know it!"

"My dear child, do not decide hastily. We love you; we all love you. You know that. And whatever may happen, you shall have a home with us. I will be a mother to you, Adele."

The girl kissed her good hostess, and the words lingered on her ear long after nightfall. Why not her mother? What parent could be more kind? What

home more grateful? And should she bring dishonor to it then? Could she be less sensitive to that thought than her father had already shown himself? She perceives, indeed, that within a short time, and since the latter communications from her father, the manner of those who had looked most suspiciously upon her has changed. But they do not know the secret of that broidered kerchief, — the secret of that terrible death-clasp, which she never, never can forget. She will be true to her own sense of honor; she will be true, too, to her own faith, — the faith in which she has been reared, — whatever may be the persuasions of that new relative beyond the seas whom she so dreads to meet.

Indeed, it is with dreary anticipations that she forecasts now her return to that *belle France* which has so long borne olive-branches along its shores for welcome; she foresees struggle, change, hypocrisies, may be, — who can tell? — and she begins to count the weeks of her stay amid the quiet of Ashfield in the same spirit in which youngsters score off the remaining days of the long vacation. Adèle finds herself gathering, and pressing within the leaves of some cherished book, little sprays of dead bloom that shall be, in the dim and mysterious future, mementos of the walks, the frolics, the joys that have belonged to this staid New England home. From the very parsonage door she

has brought away a sprig of a rampant sweet-brier that has grown there this many a year, and its delicate leaflets are among her chiefest treasures.

More eagerly than ever she listens to the kindly voices that greet her and speak cheer to her in the home of the Elderkins, — voices which she feels bitterly will soon be heard no more by her. Even the delicate and always respectful attentions of Phil have an added, though a painful charm, since they are so soon to have an end. She knows that she will remember him always, though his tenderest words can waken no hopes of a brighter future for her. She even takes him partially into her confidence, and, strolling with him down the street one day, she decoys him to the churchyard gate, where she points out to him the stone she had placed over the grave that was so sacred to her.

"Phil," said she, "you have always been full of kindness for me. When I am gone, have a care of that stone and grave, please, Phil. My best friend lies there."

"I don't think you know your best friends," stammered Phil.

"I know you are one," said Adèle, calmly, "and that I can trust you to do what I ask about this grave. Can I, Phil?"

"You know you can, Adèle; but I don't like this

talk of your going, as if you were never to be among us again. Do you think you can be happiest yonder with strangers, Adèle?"

"It 's not — where I can be happiest, Phil;" I don't ask myself that question; I fear I never can; — and her lips trembled as she said it.

"You can, — you ought," burst out Phil, fired at sight of her emotion, and would have gone on bravely and gallantly, may be, with the passion that was surging in him, if a look of hers and a warning finger had not stayed him.

"We 'll talk no more of this, Phil;" and her lips were as firm as iron now.

Both of them serious and silent for a while; until at length Adèle, in quite her old manner, says: "Of course, Phil, father may bring me to America again some day; and if so, I shall certainly beg for a little visit in Ashfield. It would be very ungrateful in me not to remember the pleasant times I 've had here."

But Phil cannot so deftly change the color of his talk; his chattiness has all gone from him. Nor does it revive on reaching home. Good Mrs. Elderkin says, "What makes you so crusty, Phil?"

LX.

MAVERICK arrives, as he had promised to do, some time in early July; comes up from the city without announcing himself in advance; and, leaving the old coach, which still makes its periodical trips from the river, a mile out from the town, strolls along the highway. He remembers well the old outline of the hills; and the straggling hedge-rows, the scattered granite boulders, the whistling of a quail from a near fence in the meadow, all recall the old scenes which he knew in boyhood. At a solitary house by the wayside a flaxen-haired youngster is blowing off soap-bubbles into the air, — with obstreperous glee whenever one rises above the house-tops, — while the mother, with arms akimbo, looks admiringly from the open window. It was the home to which the feet of Adèle had latterly so often wandered.

Maverick is anxious for a word with the Doctor before his interview with Adèle even. He does not know her present home; but he is sure he can recall the old parsonage, in whose exterior, indeed, there have been no changes for years. The shade of the embowering

elms is grateful as he strolls on into the main street of the town. It is early afternoon, and there are few passers-by. Here and there a blind is coyly turned, and a sly glance cast upon the stranger. A trio of school-boys look wonderingly at his foreign air and dress. A few loiterers upon the tavern steps — instructed, doubtless, by the stage-driver, who has duly delivered his portmanteau — remark upon him as he passes.

And now at last he sees the old porch, — the diamond lights in the door. Twenty and more years ago, and he had lounged there, as the pretty Rachel drove up in the parson's chaise. The same rose-brier is nodding its untrimmed boughs by the door. From the open window above he catches a glimpse of a hard, thin face, with spectacles on nose, that scans him curiously. The Doctor's hat and cane are upon the table at the foot of the stairs within. He taps with his knuckles upon the study-door, — and again the two college mates are met together. At sight of the visitor, whom he recognizes at a glance, the heart of the old man is stirred by a little of the old youthful feeling.

"Maverick!" and he greets him with open hand.

"Johns, God bless you!"

The parson was white-haired, and was feeble to a degree that shocked Maverick; while the latter was still erect and prim, and, with his gray hair carefully

brushed to conceal his growing baldness, appeared in excellent preservation. His coquettings for sixty years with the world, the flesh, and the Devil had not yet reduced his *phisique* to that degree of weakness which the multiplied spiritual wrestlings had entailed upon the good Doctor. The minister recognized this with a look rather of pity than of envy, and may possibly have bethought himself of that Dives who "in his lifetime received good things," but "now is tormented."

Yet he ventured upon no warning; there is, indeed, a certain assured manner about the man of the world who has passed middle age, which a country parson, however good or earnest he may be, would no more attempt to pierce than he would attempt a thrust of his pen through ice.

Their conversation, after the first greetings, naturally centers upon Adèle. Maverick is relieved to find that she knows, even now, the worst; but he is grievously pained to learn that she is still in doubt, by reason of that strange episode which had grown out of the presence and death of Madame Arles, — an episode which, even now, he is at a loss to explain.

"She will be unwilling to return with me then," said Maverick, in a troubled manner.

"No," said the Doctor, "she expects that. You will find in her, Maverick, a beautiful respect for your authority; and, I think, a still higher respect for the truth."

So it was with disturbed and conflicting feelings that Maverick made his way to the present home of Adèle.

The windows and doors of the Elderkin mansion were all open upon that July day. Adèle had seen him, even as he entered the little gate, and, recognizing him on the instant, had rushed down to meet him in the hall.

"Papa! papa!" and she had buried her face upon his bosom.

"Adèle, darling! you are glad to welcome me then?"

"Delighted, papa."

And Maverick kissed, again and again, that fair face of which he was so proud.

We recoil from the attempt to transcribe the glowing intimacy of their first talk.

After a time, Maverick says, "You will be glad to return with me, — glad to embrace again your mother?"

"My own, true mother?" said Adèle, the blood running now swift over cheek and brow.

"Your own, Adèle, — your own! As God is true!"

Adèle grows calm, — an unwonted calmness. "Tell me how she looks, papa," said she.

Your figure, Adèle; not so tall, perhaps, but slight like you; and her hair, — you have her hair, darling

(and he kissed it). Your eye too, for color, with a slight, hardly noticeable cast in it." And as Adèle turned an inquiring glance upon him, he exclaimed: "You have that too, my darling, as you look at me now."

Adèle, still calm, says: "I know it, papa; I have seen her. Do not deceive me. She died in these arms, papa!" — and with that her calmness is gone. She can only weep upon his shoulder.

"But, Adèle, child, this cannot be; do not trust to so wild a fancy. You surely believe me, darling?"

Had she argued the matter, he would have been better satisfied. She did not, however. Her old tranquillity came again.

"I will go with you, papa, cheerfully," said she.

It was only too evident to Maverick that there was a cause of distrust between them. Under all of Adèle's earnest demonstrations of affection, which were intensely grateful to him, there was still a certain apparent reserve of confidence, as if some great inward leaning of her heart found no support in him or his. This touched him to the quick. The Doctor — had he unfolded the matter to him fully — would have called it, may be, the sting of retribution. Nor was Maverick at all certain that the shadowy doubt which seemed to rest upon the mind of Adèle with respect to the identity of her mother was the sole cause of this secret re-

serve of confidence. It might be, he thought, that her affections were otherwise engaged, and that the change to which she assented with so little fervor would be at the cost of other ties to which he was a stranger.

On this score he consulted with the Doctor. As regarded Reuben, there could be no doubt. Whatever tie may have existed there was long since broken. With respect to Phil Elderkin the parson was not so certain. Maverick had been attracted by his fine, frank manner, and was not blind to his capital business capacities and prospects. If the happiness of Adèle were in question, he could entertain the affair. He even ventured to approach the topic — coyly as he could — in a talk with Adèle; and she, as the first glimmer of his meaning dawned upon her, says, "Don't whisper it, papa. It can never be."

And so Maverick — not a little disconcerted at the thought that he cannot now, as once, fathom all the depths of his child's sensibilities — sets himself resolutely to the work of preparation for departure. His *affaires* may keep him a month, and involve a visit to one or two of the principal cities; then, ho for *la belle France!* Adèle certainly lends a cheerful assent. He cannot doubt — with those repeated kisses on his cheek and brow — her earnest filial affection; and if her sentiment slips beyond his control, or parries all his keenness of vision, what else has a father, verging upon

sixty, to expect in a daughter, tenderly affectionate as she may be? Maverick's philosophy taught him to "take the world as it is." Only one serious apprehension of disquietude oppressed him; the doubts and vagaries of Adèle would clear themselves under the embrace of Julie; but in respect to the harmony of their religious beliefs he had grave doubts. There had grown upon Adèle, since he had last seen her, a womanly dignity, which even a mother must respect; and into that dignity — into the woof and warp of it — were inwrought all her religious sympathies. Was his home yonder across the seas to become the scene of struggles about creeds? It certainly was not the sort of domestic picture he had foreshadowed to himself at twenty-five. But at sixty a man blows bubbles no longer — except that of his own conceit. The heart of Maverick was not dead in him; a kiss of Adèle wakened a thrilling, delicious sensation there, of which he had forgotten his capability. He followed her graceful step and figure with an eye that looked beyond and haunted the past — vainly, vainly! Her "Papa!" — sweetly uttered — stirred sensibilities in him that amazed himself, and seemed like the phantoms of dreams he dreamed long ago.

But in the midst of Maverick's preparations for departure a letter came to hand from Mrs. Maverick, which complicated once more the situation.

LXI.

THE mother has read the letter of her child, — the letter in which appeal had been made to the father in behalf of the "unworthy" one whom the daughter believed to be sleeping in her grave. The tenderness of the appeal smote the poor woman to the heart. It bound her to the child she scarce had seen by bonds into which her whole moral being was knitted anew. But we must give the letter entire, as offering explanations which can in no way be better set forth. The very language kindles the ardor of Adèle. Her own old speech again, with the French echo of her childhood in every line.

"*Mon cher Monsieur*," — in this way she begins; for her religious severities, if not her years, have curbed any disposition to explosive tenderness, — "I have received the letter of our child, which was addressed to you. I cannot tell you the feelings with which I have read it. I long to clasp her to my heart. And she appeals to you, for me, — the dear child! Yes, you have well done in telling her that I was unworthy (*méchante*).

It is true, — unworthy in forgetting duty, — unworthy in loving too well. O Monsieur! if I could live over again that life, — that dear young life among the olive orchards! But the good Christ (thank Him!) leads back the repentant wanderers into the fold of His Church.

'Laus tibi, Christe!'

"And the poor child believes that I am in my grave. May be that were better for her and better for me. But no, I shall clasp her to my heart once more, — she, the poor babe! But I forget myself; it is a woman's letter I have been reading. What earnestness! what maturity! what dignity! what tenderness! And will she be as tender to the living as to the erring one whom she believes dead? My heart stops when I ask myself. Yes, I know she will. The Blessed Virgin whispers me that she will, and I fly to greet her! A month, two months, three months, four months? — It is an age.

"Monsieur! I cannot wait. I must take ship — sail — wings (if I could find them), and go to meet my child. Until I do there is a tempest in my brain — heart — everywhere. You are surprised, Monsieur: but there is another reason why I should go to this land where Adèle has lived. Do you wish to know it? Listen, then, Monsieur!

"Do you know who this poor sufferer was whom our

child had learned so to love, who died in her arms, who sleeps in the grave-yard there, and of whom Adèle thinks as of a mother? I have inquired, I have searched high and low, I have fathomed all. Ah, my poor, good sister Marie! Only Marie! You have never known her. In those other days at dear Arles she was too good for you to know her. Yet even then she was a guardian angel, — a guardian too late. *Mea culpa! Mea culpa!*

"I know it can be only Marie; I know it can be only she, who sleeps under the sod in Ash—— (*ce nom m'échappe*).

"Listen again: in those early, bitter charming days, when you, Monsieur, knew the hill-sides and the drives about our dear old town of Arles, poor Marie was away; had she been there, I had never listened, as I did listen, to the words you whispered in my ear. Only when it was too late, she came. Poor, good Marie! how she pleaded with me! How her tender, good face spoke reproaches to me! If I was the pride of our household, she was the angel. She it was, who, knowing the worst, said, 'Julie, this must end!' She it was who labored day and night to set me free from the wicked web that bound me. I reproached her, the poor, good Marie, in saying that she was the plainer, that she had no beauty, that she was devoured with envy. But the Blessed Virgin was working ever by

her side. Whatever doubts you may have entertained of me, Monsieur, — she created them; whatever suspicions tortured you, — she fed them, but always with the holiest of motives. And when shame came, as it did come, the poor Marie would have screened me, — would have carried the odium herself. Good Marie! the angels have her in keeping!

"Listen again, Monsieur! When that story, that false story, of the death of my poor child, came to light in the journals, who but Marie should come to me — deceived herself as I was deceived — and say, 'Julie, dear one, God has taken the child in mercy; there is no stigma can rest upon you in the eyes of the world. Live now as the Blessed Magdalen lived when Christ had befriended her.' And by her strength I was made strong; the Blessed Virgin be thanked!

"Finally, it came to her knowledge one day, — the dear Marie! — that the rumor of the death was untrue, — that the babe was living, — that the poor child had been sent over the seas to your home, Monsieur. Well, I was far away in the East. Does Marie tell me? No, the dear one! She writes me, that she is going 'over seas,' — tired of *la belle France*, — she who loved it so dearly! And she went, — to watch, to pray, to console. And I, the mother! — *Mon Dieu, Monsieur*, the words fail me. No wonder our child loved her; no wonder she seems a mother to her!

"Listen yet again, Monsieur. My poor sister died yonder, in that heretical land, — may be without absolution.

'Ave Martha margarita
In corona Jesu sita,
Tam in morte quam in vita,
Sis nobis propitia!'

I must go, if it be only to find her grave, and to secure her burial in some consecrated spot. She waits for me, — her ghost, her spirit, — I must go; the holy water must be sprinkled; the priestly rites be said. Marie, poor Marie, I will not fail you.

"Monsieur, I must go! — not alone to greet our child, but to do justice to my sainted sister! Listen well! All that has been devotional in my poor life centers here! I must go, — I must do what I may to hallow my poor sister's grave. Adèle will not give up her welcome surely, if I am moved by such religious purpose. She, too, must join me in an *Ave Maria* over that resting-place of the departed.

"I shall send this letter by the overland and British mail, that it may come to you very swiftly. It will come to you while you are with the poor child, — our Adèle. Greet her for me as warmly as you can. Tell her I shall hope, God willing, to bring her into the bosom of his Holy Church Catholic. I shall try and love her, though she remain a heretic; but this will not be.

"If I can enough curb myself, I shall wait for your answer, Monsieur; but it is necessary that I go yonder. Look for me; kiss our child for me. And if you ever prayed, Monsieur, I should say, pray for

"*Votre amie,*

"JULIE."

The letter is of the nature of a revelation to Adèle; her doubts respecting Madame Arles vanish on the instant. The truth, as set forth in her mother's language, blazes upon her mind like a flame. She loves the grave none the less, but the mother by far the more. She, too, wishes to greet her amid the scenes which she has known so long. Nor is Maverick himself averse to this new disposition of affairs, if indeed he possessed any power (which he somewhat doubts) of readjusting it. Seeing the kindly intentions toward Adèle, and the tolerant feeling (to say the least) with which Mrs. Maverick will be met by these friends of the daughter, he trusts that the mother's interviews with the Doctor, and a knowledge of the kindly influences under which Adèle has grown up, may lessen the danger of a religious altercation between mother and child, which has been his great bugbear in view of their future association.

A man of the world, like Maverick, naturally takes this common-sense view of religious differences; why

not compound matters, he thinks; and he hints as much quietly to the parson. The old gentleman's spirit is stirred to its depths by the intimation; like all earnest zealots, he recognizes one only unswerving rule of faith, and that the faith in which he has been reared. They who hold conflicting doctrines must yield, — yield absolutely, — or there is no safety for them. In his eye there was but one strait gate to the Celestial City, and that any wearing the furbelows of Rome should ever enter thereat could only come of God's exceeding mercy; for himself, it must always be a duty to cry aloud to such to strip themselves clean of their mummery, and do works "meet for repentance."

Adèle, after her first period of exultation over the recent news is passed, relapses — perhaps by reason of its excess — into something of her old vague doubt and apprehension of coming evil. The truth — if it be truth — is so strange! — so mysteriously strange that she shall indeed clasp her mother to her heart; the grave yonder is so real! and that fearful embrace in death so present to her! Or it may be an anticipation of the fearful spiritual estrangement that must ensue, and of which she seems to find confirmation in the earnest talk and gloomy forebodings of the Doctor.

Maverick effects a diversion by proposing a jaunt of travel, in which Rose shall be their companion. Adèle accepts the scheme with delight, — a delight,

after all, which lies as much in the thought of watching the eager enjoyment of Rose as in any pleasant distractions of her own. The pleasure of Maverick is by no means so great as in that trip of a few years back. Then he had for companion an enthusiastic girl, to whom life was fresh, and all the clouds that seemed to rest upon it so shadowy, that each morning sun lifting among the mountains dispersed them utterly.

Now, Adèle showed the thoughtfulness of a woman, — her enthusiasms held in check by a more calm estimate of the life that opened before her, — her sportiveness overborne by a soberness, which, if it gave dignity, gave also a womanly gravity. Yet she did not lack filial devotion; she admired still that easy world-manner of his which had once called out her enthusiastic regard, but now queried in her secret heart if its acquisition had not involved cost of purity of conscience. She loved him too, — yes, she loved him; and her evening and morning kiss and embrace were reminders to him of a joy he might have won, but had not, — of a home peace that might have been his, but whose image now only lifted above his horizon like some splendid mirage crowded with floating fairy shapes, and like the mirage melted presently into idle vapor.

It was a novel experience for Maverick to find him-

self (as he did time and again upon this summer trip in New England) sandwiched, of a Sunday, between his two blooming companions and some sober-sided deacon, in the pew of a country meeting-house. How his friend Papiol would have stared! And the suggestion, coming to him with the buzz of a summer fly through the open windows, did not add to his devotional sentiment. Yet Maverick would follow gravely the scramble of the singers through the appointed hymn with a sober self-denial, counting the self-denial a virtue. We all make memoranda of the small religious virtues when the large ones are missing.

Upon the return to Ashfield there is found a new letter from Madame Maverick. She can restrain herself no longer. Under the advice of her brother, she will, with her maid, take the first safe ship leaving Marseilles for New York. She longs to bring Adèle with herself, by special consecration, under the guardianship of the Holy Virgin.

The Doctor is greatly grieved in view of the speedy departure of Adèle, and tenfold grieved when Maverick lays before him the letter of the mother, and he sees the fiery zeal which the poor child must confront.

Over and over in those last interviews he seeks to fortify her faith; he warns her against the delusions, the falsities, the idolatries of Rome; he warns her

to distrust a religion of creeds, of human authority, of traditions. Christ, the Bible, — these are the true monitors; and "Mind, Adaly," says he, "hold fast always to the Doctrine of the Westminster Divines. That is sound, — that is sound!"

LXII.

REUBEN went with a light heart upon his voyage. The tender memories of Ashfield were mostly lived down. (Had the letter of Adèle ever reached him, it might have been far different.) Rose, Phil, the Tourtelots, the Tew partners (still worrying through a green old age), the meeting-house, even the Doctor himself and Adèle, seemed to belong to a sphere whose interests were widely separate from his own, and in which he should appear henceforth only as a casual spectator. The fascinations of his brilliant business successes had a firm grip upon him. He indulges himself, indeed, from time to time, with the fancy that some day, far off now, he will return to the scenes of his boyhood, and astonish some of the old landholders by buying them out at a fabulous price, and by erecting a "castle" of his own, to be enlivened by the fairy graces of some sylph not yet fairly determined upon. Surely not Rose, who would hardly be equal to the grandeur of his proposed establishment, if she were not already engrossed by that "noodle" (his thought expressing itself thus wrathfully) of an

assistant minister. Adèle, — and the name has something in it that electrifies, in spite of himself, — Adèle, if she ever overcomes her qualms of conscience, will yield to the tender persuasions of Phil. "Good luck to him!" — and he says this, too, with a kind of wrathful glee.

Still, he builds his cloud castles; some one must needs inhabit them. Some paragon of refinement and of beauty will one day appear, for whose tripping feet his wealth will lay down a path of pearls and gold. The lonely, star-lit nights at sea encourage such phantasms; and the break of the waves upon the bow, with their myriad of phosphorescent sparkles, cheats and illumines the fancy. We will not follow him throughout his voyage. On a balmy morning of July he wakes with the great cliff of Gibraltar frowning on him. After this come light, baffling winds, and for a week he looks southward upon the mysterious, violet lift of the Barbary shores, and pushes slowly eastward into the blue expanse of the Mediterranean. In the Sicilian ports he is abundantly successful. He has ample time to cross over to Naples, to ascend Vesuvius, and to explore Herculaneum and Pompeii. But he does not forget the other side of the beautiful bay, Baiæ and Pozzuoli. He takes, indeed, a healthful pleasure in writing to the Doctor a description of this latter, and of his walk in the vicinity of the great seaport where

St. Paul must have landed from his ship of the *Castor and Pollux*, on his way from Syracuse. But he does not tell the Doctor that, on the same evening, he attended an opera at the San Carlo in Naples, of which the ballet, if nothing else, would have called down the good man's anathema.

An American of twenty-five, placed for the first time upon the sunny pavements of Naples, takes a new lease of life, — at least of its imaginative part. The beautiful blue stretch of sea, the lava streets, the buried towns and cities, the baths and ruins of Baiæ, the burning mountain, piling its smoke and fire into the serene sky, the memories of Tiberius, of Cicero, of Virgil, — all these enchant him. And beside these are the things of to-day, — the luscious melons, the oranges, the figs, the war-ships lying on the bay, the bloody miracle of St. Januarius, the Lazzaroni upon the church steps, the processions of friars, and always the window of his chamber, looking one way upon blue Capri, and the other upon smouldering Vesuvius.

At Naples Reuben hears from the captain of the *Meteor* — in which good ship he has made his voyage, and counts upon making his return — that the vessel can take up half her cargo at a better freight by touching at Marseilles. Whereupon Reuben orders him to go thither, promising to join him at that port in a fortnight. A fortnight only for Rome, for Florence, for

Pisa, for the City of Palaces, and then the marvelous Cornice road along the shores of the sea. Terracina brought back to him the story of Mr. Alderman Popkins and the Principessa, and the bandits; after this came the heights of Albano and Soracte, and there, at last, the Tiber, the pyramid tomb, the great church dome, the stone pines of the Janiculan hill, — Rome itself. Reuben was not strong or curious in his classics; the galleries and the churches took a deeper hold upon him than the Forum and the ruins. He wandered for hours together under the arches of St. Peter's. He wished he might have led the Doctor along its pavement into the very presence of the mysteries of the Scarlet Woman of Babylon. He wished Miss Almira, with her saffron ribbons, might be there, sniffing at her little phial of salts, and may be singing treble. The very meeting-house upon the green, that was so held in reverence, with its belfry and spire atop, would hardly make a scaffolding from which to brush the cobwebs from the frieze below the vaulting of this grandest of temples. Oddly enough, he fancies Deacon Tourtelot, in his snuff-colored surtout, pacing down the nave with him, and saying, — as he would be like to say, — "Must ha' been a smart man that built it; but I guess they don't have better preachin', as a gineral thing, than the old Doctor gives us on Fast-Days or in 'protracted' meetin's."

Such queer humors and droll comparisons flash into the mind of Reuben, even under all his sense of awe, — a swift, disorderly mingling of the themes and offices which kindled his first sense of religious awe under a home atmosphere with the wondrous forms and splendor which kindle a new awe now. The great dome enwalling with glittering mosaics a heaven of its own, and blazing with figured saints, and the golden distich, "Thou art Peter, — to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven," — all this seems too grand to be untrue. Are not the keys verily here? Can falsehood build up so august a lie? A couple of friars shuffle past him, and go to their prayers at some near altar; he does not even smile at their shaven pates and their dowdy, coarse gowns of serge. Low music from some far-away chapel comes floating under the paneled vaultings, and loses itself under the great dome, with a sound so gentle, so full of entreaty, that it seems to him the dove on the high altar might have made it with a cooing and a flutter of her white wings. A mother and two daughters, in black, glide past him, and drop upon their knees before some saintly shrine, and murmur their thanksgivings, or their entreaty. And he, with no aim of worship, yet somehow shocked out of his unbelief by the very material influences around him.

Reuben's old wranglings and struggles with doubt

had ended — where so many are apt to end, when the world is sunny and success weaves its silken meshes for the disport of self — in a quiet disbelief that angered him no longer, because he had given over all fight with it. But the great dome, flaming with its letters, *Ædificabo meam Ecclesiam*, shining there for ages, kindled the fight anew. And strange as it may seem, and perplexing as it was to the Doctor (when he received Reuben's story of it), he came out from his first visit to the great Romish temple with his religious nature more deeply stirred than it had been for years.

Ædificabo meam Ecclesiam. He had uttered it. There was then something to build, — something that had been built, at whose shrine millions worshiped trustingly.

Under the somber vaultings of the great Florentine Cathedral, the impression was not weakened. The austere gloom of it chimed more nearly with his state of unrest. Then there are the galleries, the painted ceilings, — angels, saints, martyrs, holy families, — can art have been leashed through so many ages with a pleasant fiction? Is there not somewhere at bottom an earnest, vital truth, which men must needs cling by if they be healthful and earnest themselves? Even the meretricious adornments of the churches of Genoa afford new evidence of the way in which the heart of a people has lavished itself upon belief; and if belief, why, then, hope.

Upon the Cornice road, with Italy behind him and home before (such home as he knows), he thinks once more of those he has left. Not that he has forgotten them altogether; he has purchased a rich coral necklace in Naples, which will be the very thing for his old friend Rose; and, in Rome, the richest cameos to be found in the Via Condotti he has secured for Adèle; even for Aunt Eliza he has brought away from Florence a bit of the *pietra dura*, a few olive-leaves upon a black ground. Nor has he forgotten a rich piece of the Genoese velvet for Mrs. Brindlock; and, for his father, an old missal, which, he trusts, dates back far enough to save it from the odium he attaches to the present Church, and to give it an early Christian sanctity. He has counted upon seeing Mr. Maverick at Marseilles, but learns, with surprise, upon his arrival there, that this gentleman had sailed for America some months previously. The ship is making a capital freight, and the captain informs him that application has been made for the only vacant state-room in their little cabin by a lady attended by her maid. Reuben assents cheerfully to this accession of companionship; and, running off for a sight of the ruins at Nismes and Arles, returns only in time to catch the ship upon the day of its departure. As they pass out of harbor, the lady passenger, in deep black, (the face seems half familiar to him,) watches wistfully the re-

ceding shores, and, as they run abreast the chapel of Nôtre Dame de la Garde, she devoutly crosses herself and tells her beads.

Reuben is to make the voyage with the mother of Adèle. Both bound to the same quiet township of New England; he, to reach Ashfield once more, there to undergo swiftly a new experience, — an experience that can come to no man but once; she, to be clasped in the arms of Adèle, — a cold embrace and the last!

LXIII.

REUBEN had heard latterly very little of domestic affairs at Ashfield. He knew scarce more of the family relations of Adèle than was covered by that confidential announcement of the parson's which had so set on fire his generous zeal. The spinster, indeed, in one of her later letters had hinted, in a roundabout manner, that Adèle's family misfortunes were not looking so badly as they once did, — that the poor girl (she believed) felt tenderly still toward her old playmate, — and that Mr. Maverick was, beyond all question, a gentleman of very easy fortune. But Reuben was not in a mood to be caught by any chaff administered by his most respectable aunt. If, indeed, he had known all, — if that hearty burst of Adèle's gratitude had come to him, — if he could once have met her with the old freedom of manner, — ah! then — then —

But no; he thinks of her now as one under social blight, which he would have lifted or borne with her had not her religious squeamishness forbidden. He tries to forget what was most charming in her, and has succeeded passably well.

"I suppose she is still modeling her heroes on the Catechism," he thought, "and Phil will very likely pass muster."

The name of Madame Maverick as attaching to their fellow-passenger — which came to his ear for the first time on the second day out from port — considerably startled him. Madame Maverick is, he learns, on her way to join her husband and child in America. But he is by no means disposed to entertain a very exalted respect for any claimant of such name and title. He finds, indeed, the prejudices of his education (so he calls them) asserting themselves with a fiery heat; and most of all he is astounded by the artfully arranged religious drapery with which this poor woman — as it appears to him — seeks to cover her shortcomings. He had brought away from the atmosphere of the old cathedrals a certain quickened religious sentiment, by the aid of which he had grown into a respect, not only for the Romish faith, but for Christian faith of whatever degree. And now he encountered what seemed to him its gross prostitution. The old Doctor then was right: this Popish form of heathenism was but a device of Satan, — a scarlet covering of iniquity. Yet, in losing respect for one form of faith, he found himself losing respect for all. It was easy for him to match the present hypocrisy with hypocrisies that he had seen of old.

Meantime, the good ship *Meteor* was skirting the shores of Spain, and had made a good hundred leagues of her voyage before Reuben had ventured to make himself known as the old schoolmate and friend of the child whom Madame Maverick was on her way to greet after so many years of separation. The truth was, that Reuben, his first disgust being overcome, could not shake off the influence of something attractive and winning in the manner of Madame Maverick. In her step and in her lithe figure he saw the step and figure of Adèle. All her orisons and aves, which she failed not to murmur each morning and evening, were reminders of the earnest faith of her poor child. It is impossible to treat her with disrespect. Nay, it is impossible, — as Reuben begins to associate more intimately the figure and the voice of this quiet lady with his memories of another and a younger one, — quite impossible, that he should not feel his whole chivalrous nature stirred in him, and become prodigal of attentions. If there were hypocrisy, it somehow cheated him into reverence.

The lady is, of course, astounded at Reuben's disclosure to her. "*Mon Dieu!* you, then, are the son of that good priest of whom I have heard so much! And you are Puritan? I would not have thought that. They love the vanities of the world then," — and her eye flashed over the well-appointed dress of Reuben,

who felt half an inclination to hide, if it had been possible, the cluster of gairish charms which hung at his watch-chain. "You have shown great kindness to my child, Monsieur. I thank you with my whole heart."

"She is very charming, Madame," said Reuben, in an easy, *dégagé* manner, which, to tell truth, he put on to cover a little embarrassing revival of his old sentiment.

Madame Maverick looked at him keenly. "Describe her to me, if you will be so good, Monsieur."

Whereupon Reuben ran on, — jauntily, at first, as if it had been a ballet-girl of San Carlo whose picture he was making out; but his old hearty warmth declared itself by degrees; and his admiration and his tenderness gave such warm color to his language as it might have shown if her little gloved hand had been shivering even then in his own passionate clasp. And as he closed, with a great glow upon his face, Madame Maverick burst forth, —

"*Mon Dieu*, how I love her! Yet is it not a thing astonishing that I should ask you, a stranger, Monsieur, how my own child is looking? *Culpa mea! culpa mea!*" and she clutched at her rosary, and mumbled an ave, with her eyes lifted and streaming tears.

Reuben looked upon her in wonder, amazed at the depth of her emotion. Could this be all hypocrisy?

"*Tenez!*" said she, recovering herself, and reading,

as it were, his doubts. "You count these" (lifting her rosary) "baubles yonder, and our prayers pagan prayers; my husband has told me, and that she, Adèle, is taught thus, and that the *Bon Dieu* has forsaken our Holy Church, — that He comes near now only to your — what shall I call them? — meeting-houses? Tell me, Monsieur, does Adèle think this?"

"I think," said Reuben, "that your daughter would have charity for any religious faith which was earnest."

"Charity! *Mon Dieu!* Charity for sins, charity for failings, — yes, I ask it; but for my faith! No, Monsieur, no — no — a thousand times, no!"

"This is real," thought Reuben.

"Tell me, Monsieur," continued she, with a heat of language that excited his admiration, "what is it you believe there? What is the horror against which your New England teachers would warn my poor Adèle? May the Blessed Virgin be near her!"

Whereupon, Reuben undertook to lay down the grounds of distrust in which he had been educated; not, surely, with the fervor or the logical sequence which the old Doctor would have given to the same, but yet inveighing in good set terms against the vain ceremonials, the idolatries, the mummeries, the confessional, the empty absolution; and summing up all with the formula (may be he had heard the Doctor use the same language) that the piety of the Romanist

was not so much a deep religious conviction of the truth, as a sentiment.

"Sentiment!" exclaims Madame Maverick. "What else? What but love of the good God?"

But not so much by her talk as by the everyday sight of her serene, unfaltering devotion is Reuben won into a deep respect for her faith.

Those are rare days and rare nights for him, as the good ship *Meteor* slips down past the shores of Spain to the Straits, — days all sunny, nights moonlit. To the right, — not discernible, but he knows they are there, — the swelling hills of Catalonia and of Andalusia, the marvelous Moorish ruins, the murmurs of the Guadalquivir; to the left, a broad sweep of burnished sea, on which, late into the night, the moon pours a stream of molten silver, that comes rocking and widening toward him, and vanishes in the shadow of the ship. The cruise has been a splendid venture for him, — twenty-five thousand at the least. And as he paces the decks, — in the view only of the silent man at the wheel and of the silent stars, — he forecasts the palaces he will build. The feeble Doctor shall have ease and every luxury; he will be gracious in his charities; he will astonish the old people by his affluence; he will live —

Just here, he spies a female figure stealing from the companion-way, and gliding beyond the shelter of the

wheel-house. Half concealed as he chances to be in the shadow of the rigging, he sees her fall upon her knees, and, with head uplifted, cross her hands upon her bosom. 'T is a short prayer, and the instant after she glides below.

"Good God! what trust!" — it is an ejaculatory prayer of Reuben's, rather than an oath. And with it, swift as the wind, comes a dreary sense of unrest. The palaces he had built vanish. The stars blink upon him kindly, and from their wondrous depths challenge his thought. The sea swashes idly against the floating ship. He too afloat, — afloat. Whither bound? Yearning still for a belief on which he may repose. And he bethinks himself, — does it lie somewhere under the harsh and dogmatic utterances of the Ashfield pulpit? At the thought, he recalls the weary iteration of cumbersome formulas, that passed through his brain like leaden plummets, and the swift lashings of rebuke, if he but reached over for a single worldly floweret, blooming beside the narrow path; and yet, — and yet, from the leaden atmosphere of that past, saintly faces beam upon him, — a mother's, Adèle's, — nay, the kindly fixed gray eyes of the old Doctor glow upon him with a fire that must have been kindled with truth.

Does it lie in the melodious aves, and under the robes of Rome? The sordid friars, with their shaven

pates, grin at him; some Rabelais head of a priest in the confessional-stall leers at him with mockery: and yet the golden letters of the great dome gleam again with their blazing legend, and the figure of the Magdalen yonder has just now murmured, in tones that must surely have reached a gracious ear, —

"Tibi Christe, redemptori,
Nostro vero salvatori!"

Is the truth between? Is it in both? Is it real? And if real, why may not the same lips declare it under the cathedral or the meeting-house roof? Why not — in God's name — charity?

LXIV.

THE *Meteor* is a snug ship, well found, well manned, and, as the times go, well officered. The captain, indeed, is not over-alert or fitted for high emergencies; but what emergencies can belong to so placid a voyage? For a week after the headlands of Tarifa and Spartel have sunk under the eastern horizon, the vessel is kept every day upon her course, — her top-gallant and studding sails all distent with the wind blowing freely from over Biscay. After this come light, baffling, westerly breezes, with sometimes a clear sky, and then all is overclouded by the drifting trade-mists. Zigzagging on, quietly as ever, save the bustle and whiz and flapping canvas of the ship "in stays," the good *Meteor* pushes gradually westward.

Meantime a singular and almost tender intimacy grew up between Reuben and the lady voyager. It is always agreeable to a young man to find a listening ear in a lady whose age puts her out of the range of any flurry of sentiment, and whose sympathy gives kindly welcome to his confidence. All that early life of his he detailed to her with a particularity and a warmth

(himself unconscious of the warmth) which brought the childish associations of her daughter fresh to the mind of poor Madame Maverick. No wonder that she gave a willing ear! no wonder that the glow of his language kindled her sympathy! Nor with such a listener does he stop with the boyish life of Ashfield. He unfolds his city career, and the bright promises that are before him, — promises of business success, which (he would make it appear) are all that fill his heart now. In the pride of his twenty-five years he loves to represent himself as *blasé* in sentiment.

Madame Maverick has been taught, in these latter years, a large amount of self-control; so she can listen with a grave, nay, even a kindly face, to Reuben's sweeping declarations. And if, at a hint from her, — which he shrewdly counts Jesuitical, — his thought is turned in the direction of his religious experiences, he has his axioms, his common-sense formulas, his irreproachable coolness, and, at times, a noisy show of distrust, under which it is easy to see an eager groping after the ends of that great tangled skein of thought within, which is a weariness.

"If you could only have a talk with Father Ambrose!" says Madame Maverick with half a sigh.

"I should like that of all things," says Reuben, with a touch of merriment. "I suppose he 's a jolly old fellow, with rosy cheeks and full of humor. By Jove!

there go the beads again!" (He says this latter to himself, however, as he sees the nervous fingers of the poor lady plying her rosary, and her lips murmuring some catch of a prayer.)

Yet he cannot but respect her devotion profoundly, wondering how it can have grown up under the heathenisms of her life; wondering perhaps, too, how his own heathenism could have grown up under the roof of a parsonage. It will be an odd encounter, he thinks, for this woman, with the people of Ashfield, with the Doctor, with Adèle.

There are gales, but the good ship rides them out jauntily, with but a single reef in her topsails. Within five weeks from the date of her leaving Marseilles she is within a few days' sail of New York. A few days' sail! It may mean over-much; for there are mists and hazy weather, which forbid any observation. The last was taken a hundred miles to the eastward of George's Shoal. Under an easy off-shore wind the ship is beating westward. But the clouds hang low, and there is no opportunity for determining position. At last, one evening, there is a little lift, and, for a moment only, a bright light blazes over the starboard bow. The captain counts it a light upon one of the headlands of the Jersey shore; and he orders the helmsman (she is sailing in the eye of an easy westerly breeze) to give her a couple of points more "northing;" and the yards and

sheets are trimmed accordingly. The ship pushes on more steadily as she opens to the wind, and the mists and coming night conceal all around them.

"What do you make of the light, Mr. Yardley?" says the captain, addressing the mate.

"Can't say, sir, with such a bit of a look. If it should be Fire Island, we 're in a bad course, sir."

"That 's true enough," said the captain, thoughtfully. "Put a man in the chains, Mr. Yardley, and give us the water."

"I hope we shall be in the bay by morning, Captain," said Reuben, who stood smoking leisurely near the wheel. But the captain was preoccupied, and answered nothing.

A little after, a voice from the chains came chanting full and loud, "By the mark — nine!"

"This 'll never do, Mr. Yardley," said the captain, "Jersey shore or any other. Let all hands keep by to put the ship about."

A voice forward was heard to say something of a roar that sounded like the beat of surf; at which the mate stepped to the side of the ship and listened anxiously.

"It 's true, sir," said he, coming aft. "Captain, there 's something very like the beat of surf, here away to the no'th'ard."

A flutter in the canvas caught the captain's attention.

"It 's the wind slacking; there 's a bare capful," said the mate, "and I 'm afeard there 's mischief brewing yonder." He pointed as he spoke a little to the south of east, where the darkness seemed to be giving way to a luminous gray cloud of mist.

"And a half — six!" shouts again the man in the chains.

The captain meets it with a swelling oath, which betrays clearly enough his anxiety. "There 's not a moment to lose, Yardley; see all ready there! Keep her a good full, my boy!" (to the man at the wheel.)

The darkness was profound. Reuben, not a little startled by the new aspect of affairs, still kept his place upon the quarter-deck. He saw objects flitting across the waist of the ship, and heard distinctly the coils flung down with a clang upon the wet decks. There was something weird and ghostly in those half-seen figures, in the indistinct maze of cordage and canvas above, and the phosphorescent streaks of spray streaming away from either bow.

"Are you ready there?" says the captain.

"Ay, ay, sir," responds the mate.

"Put your helm a-lee, my man! — Hard down!"

"Hard down it is, sir!"

The ship veers up into the wind; and, as the captain shouts his order, "Mainsail haul!" the canvas shakes; the long, cumbrous yard groans upon its bear-

ings; there is a great whizzing of the cordage through the blocks; but, in the midst of it all, — coming keenly to the captain's ear, — a voice from the fore-hatch exclaims, "By G—, she touches!"

The next moment proved it true. The good ship minded her helm no more. The fore-yards are brought round by the run and the mizzen, but the light wind — growing lighter — hardly clears the flapping canvas from the spars.

In the sunshine, with so moderate a sea, 't would seem little; in so little depth of water they might warp her off; but the darkness magnifies the danger; besides which, an ominous sighing and murmur are coming from that luminous misty mass to the southward. Through all this, Reuben has continued smoking upon the quarter-deck; a landsman under a light wind, and with a light sea, hardly estimates at their true worth such intimations as had been given of the near breaking of the surf, and of the shoaling water. Even the touch upon bottom, of which the grating evidence had come home to his own perceptions, brought up more the fate of his business venture than any sense of personal peril. We can surely warp her off in the morning, he thought; or, if the worst came, insurance was full, and it would be easy boating to the shore.

"It 's lucky there 's no wind," said he to Yardley.

"Will you obleege me, Mr. Johns? Take a good

strong puff of your cigar, — here, upon the larboard rail, sir," and he took the lantern from the companion-way that he might see the drift of the smoke. For a moment it lifted steadily; then, with a toss it vanished away — shoreward. The first angry puffs of the south-easter were coming.

The captain had seen all, and with an excited voice said, "Mr. Yardley, clew up, fore and aft, — clew up every thing; put all snug, and make ready the best bower."

"Mr. Johns," said he, approaching Reuben, "we are on a lee shore; it should be Long Island beach by the soundings; with calm weather, and a kedge, we might work her off with the lift of the tide. But the Devil and all is in that puff from the sou'east."

"Oh, well, we can anchor," says Reuben.

"Yes, we can anchor, Mr. Johns; but if that sou'-easter turns out the gale it promises, the best anchor aboard won't be so good as a gridiron."

"Do you advise taking to the boats, then?" asked Reuben, a little nervously.

"I advise nothing, Mr. Johns. Do you hear the murmur of the surf yonder? It 's bad landing under such a pounding of the surf, with daylight; in the dark, where one can't catch the drift of the waves, it might be — hell!"

The word startled Reuben. His philosophy had

always contemplated death at a distance, toward which easy and gradual approaches might be made: but here it was, now, at a cable's length!

And yet it was very strange; the sea was not high; no gale as yet; only an occasional grating thump of the keel was a reminder that the good *Meteor* was not still afloat. But the darkness! Yes, the darkness was complete, (hardly a sight even of the topmen who were aloft — as in the sunniest of weather — stowing the canvas,) and to the northward that groan and echo of the resounding surf; to the southward, the whirling white of waves that are lifting now, topped with phosphorescent foam.

The anchor is let go, but even this does not bring the ship's head to the wind. Those griping sands hold her keel fast. The force of the rising gale strikes her full abeam, giving her a great list to shore. It is in vain the masts are cut away, and the rigging drifts free; the hulk lifts only to settle anew in the grasping sands. Every old seaman upon her deck knows that she is a doomed ship.

From time to time, as the crashing spars or the leaden thump upon the sands have startled those below, Madame Maverick and her maid have made their appearance, in a wild flutter of anxiety, asking eager questions; (Reuben alone can understand them or answer them;) but as the southeaster grows, as it does,

into a fury of wind, and the poor hulk reels vainly, and is overlaid with a torrent of biting salt spray, Madame Maverick becomes calm. Instinctively, she sees the worst.

"Could I only clasp Adèle once more in these arms, I would say, cheerfully, '*Nunc dimittis.*'"

Reuben regarded her calm faith with a hungry eagerness. Not, indeed, that calmness was lacking in himself. Great danger, in many instances, sublimates the faculties of keenly strung minds. But underneath his *calmness there was an unrest, hungering for repose,* — the repose of a fixed belief. If even then the breaking waves had whelmed him in their mad career, he would have made no wailing outcry, but would have clutched — how eagerly! — at the merest shred of that faith which, in other days and times, he had seen illuminate the calm face of the father. Something to believe, — on which to float upon such a sea!

But the waves and winds make sport of beliefs. Prayers count nothing against that angry surge. Two boats are already swept from the davits, and are gone upon the whirling waters. A third, with infinite pains, is dropped into the yeast. It is hard to tell who gives the orders. But, once afloat, there is a rush upon it, and away it goes, — overcrowded, and within eyeshot lifts, turns, and a crowd of swimmers float for a moment, — one with an oar, another with a thwart that

the waves have torn out, — and in the yeast of waters they vanish.

One boat only remains, and it is launched with more careful handling; three cling by the wreck; the rest — save only Madame Maverick and Reuben — are within her, as she tosses still in the lee of the vessel.

"There 's room!" cries some one; "jump quick! for God's sake!"

And Reuben, with some strange, generous impulse, seizes upon Madame Maverick, and, before she can rebel or resist, has dropped her over the rail. The men grapple her and drag her in; but in the next moment the little cockle of a boat is drifted yards away.

The few who are left — the boatswain among them — are toiling on the wet deck to give a last signal from the little brass howitzer on the forecastle. As the sharp crack breaks on the air, — a miniature sound in that howl of the storm, — the red flash of the gun gives Reuben, as the boat lurches toward the wreck again, a last glance of Madame Maverick, — her hands clasped, her eyes lifted, and calm as ever. More than ever too her face was like the face of Adèle, — such as the face of Adèle must surely become, when years have sobered her and her buoyant faith has ripened into calm. And from that momentary glance of the serene countenance, and that flashing associated memory of Adèle, a subtile,

mystic influence is born in him, by which he seems suddenly transfused with the same trustful serenity which just now he gazed upon with wonder. If indeed the poor lady is already lost, — he thinks it for a moment, — her spirit has fanned and cheered him as it passed. Once more, as if some mysterious hand had brought them to his reach, he grapples with those lost lines of hope and trust which in that youthful year of his exuberant emotional experience he had held and lost, — once more, now, in hand, — once more he is elated with that wonderful sense of a religious poise, that, it would seem, no doubts or terrors could overbalance. Unconsciously kneeling on the wet deck, he is rapt into a kind of ecstatic indifference to winds, to waves, to danger, to death.

The boom of a gun is heard to the northward. It must be from shore. There are helpers at work, then. Some hope yet for this narrow tide of life, which just seemed losing itself in some infinite flow beyond. Life is, after all, so sweet! The boatswain forward labors desperately to return an answering signal; but the spray, the slanted deck, the overleaping waves, are too much for him. Darkness and storm and despair rule again.

The wind, indeed, has fallen; the force of the gale is broken; but the waves are making deeper and more desperate surges. The wreck, which had remained

fixed in the fury of the wind, lifts again under the great swell of the sea, and is dashed anew and anew upon the shoal. With every lift her timbers writhe and creak, and all the remaining upper works crack and burst open with the strain.

Reuben chances to espy an old-fashioned round life-buoy lashed to the taffrail, and, cutting it loose, makes himself fast to it. He overhears the boatswain say, yonder by the forecastle, "These thumpings will break her in two in an hour. Cling to a spar, Jack."

The gray light of dawn at last breaks, and shows a dim line of shore, on which parties are moving, dragging some machine, with which they hope to cast a line over the wreck. But the swell is heavier than ever, the timbers nearer to parting. At last a flash of lurid light from the dim shore-line, — a great boom of sound, and a line goes spinning out like a spider's web up into the gray, bleak sky. Too far! too short! and the line tumbles, plashing into the water. A new and fearful lift of the sea shatters the wreck, the fore part of the ship still holding fast to the sands; but all abaft the mainmast lifts, surges, reels, topples over; with the wreck, and in the angry swirl and torment of waters, Reuben goes down.

LXV.

THAT morning, — it was the 22d of September, in the year 1842, — Mr. Brindlock came into his counting-room some two hours before noon, and says to his porter and factotum, as he enters the door, "Well, Roger, I suppose you 'll be counting this puff of a southeaster the equinoctial, eh?"

"Indeed, sir, and it 's an awful one. The *Meteor* 's gone ashore on Long Beach; and there 's talk of young Mr. Johns being lost."

"Good Heavens!" said Brindlock, "you don't tell me so!"

By half-past three he was upon the spot; a little remaining fragment only of the *Meteor* hanging to the sands, and a great *débris* of bales, spars, shattered timbers, bodies, drifted along the shore, — Reuben's among them.

But he is not dead; at least so say the wreckers, who throng upon the beach; the life-buoy is still fast to him, though he is fearfully shattered and bruised. He is borne away under the orders of Brindlock to some near house, and presently revives enough to ask that he may be carried — "home."

As, in the opening of this story, his old grandfather, the Major, was borne away from the scene of his first battle by easy stages homeward, so now the grandson, far feebler and after more terrible encounter with death, is carried by "easy stages" to his home in Ashfield. Again the city, the boat, the river, — with its banks yellowing with harvests, and brightened with the glowing tints of autumn; again the sluggish brigs drifting down with the tide, and sailors in tasseled caps leaning over the bulwarks; again the flocks feeding leisurely on the rock-strewn hills; again the ferryman, in his broad, cumbrous scow, oaring across; again the stoppage at the wharf of the little town, from which the coach still plies over the hills to Ashfield.

On the way thither, a carriage passes them, in which are Adèle and her father. The news of disaster flies fast; they have learned of the wreck, and the names of passengers. They go to learn what they can of the mother, whom the daughter has scarce known. The passing is too hasty for recognition. Brindlock arrives at last with his helpless charge at the door of the parsonage. The Doctor is overwhelmed at once with grief and with joy. The news had come to him, and he had anticipated the worst. But "Thank God! 'Joseph, my son, is yet alive!' Still a probationer; there is yet hope that he may be brought into the fold."

He insists that he shall be placed below, upon his

own bed, just out of his study. For himself, he shall need none until the crisis is past. But the crisis does not pass; it is hard to say when it will. The wounds are not so much; but a low fever has set in, (the physician says,) owing to exposure and excitement, and he can predict nothing as to the result. Even Aunt Eliza is warmed into unwonted attention as she sees that poor battered hulk of humanity lying there; she spares herself no fatigue, God knows, but she sheds tears in her own chamber over this great disaster. There are good points even in the spinster; when shall we learn that the best of us are not wholly good, nor the worst wholly bad?

Days and days pass. Reuben hovering between life and death; and the old Doctor, catching chance rest upon the little cot they have placed for him in the study, looks yearningly by the dim light of the sick-lamp upon that dove which his lost Rachel had hung upon his wall above the sword of his father. He fancies that the face of Reuben, pinched with suffering, resembles more than ever the mother. Of sickness, or of the little offices of friends which cheat it of pains, the old gentleman knows nothing: sick souls only have been his care. And it is pitiful to see his blundering, eager efforts to do something, as he totters round the sick-chamber, where Reuben, with very much of youthful vigor left in him, makes fight against the

arch-enemy who one day conquers us all. For many days after his arrival there is no consciousness, — only wild words (at times words that sound to the ears of the good Doctor strangely wicked, and that make him groan in spirit), — tender words, too, of dalliance, and eager, loving glances, — murmurs of boyish things, of sunny, school-day noonings, — hearing which, the Doctor thinks that, if this light must go out, it had better have gone out in those days of comparative innocence.

Over and over the father appeals to the village physician to know what the chances may be, — to which that old gentleman, fumbling his watch-key, and looking grave, makes very doubtful response. He hints at a possible undermining of the constitution in these later years of city life.

God only knows what habits the young man may have formed in these last years; surely the Doctor does not; and he tells the physician as much, with a groan of anguish.

Meantime, Maverick and Adèle have gone upon their melancholy search; and, as they course over the island to the southern beach, the sands, the plains, the houses, the pines, drift by the eye of Adèle as in a dream. At last she sees a great reach of water, — piling up, as it rolls lazily in from seaward, into high walls of waves, that are no sooner lifted than they

break and send sparkling floods of foam over the sands. Bits of wreck, dark clots of weed, are strewed here and there, — stragglers scanning every noticeable heap, every floating thing that comes in.

Is she dead? is she living? They have heard only on the way that many bodies are lying in the near houses, — many bruised and suffering ones; while some have come safe to land, and gone to their homes. They make their way from that dismal surf-beaten shore to the nearest house. There are loiterers about the door; and within, — within, Adèle finds her mother at last, clasps her to her heart, kisses the poor dumb lips that will never more open, — never say to her rapt ears, "My child! my darling!"

Maverick is touched as he has never been touched before; the age of early sentiment comes drifting back to his world-haunted mind; nay, tears come to those eyes that have not known them for years. The grief, the passionate, vain tenderness of Adèle, somehow seems to sanctify the memory of the dead one who lies before him, her great wealth of hair streaming dank and fetterless over the floor.

Not more tenderly, scarce more tearfully, could he have ministered to one who had been his life-long companion. Where shall the poor lady be buried? Adèle answers that, with eyes flashing through her tears, — nowhere but in Ashfield, nowhere except beside the sister, Marie.

It is a dismal journey for the father and the daughter; it is almost a silent journey. Does she love him less? No, a thousand times, no. Does he love her less? No, a thousand times, no. In such presence love is awed into silence. As the mournful *cortége* enters the town of Ashfield, it passes the home of that fatherless boy, Arthur, for whom Adèle had shown such sympathy. The youngster is there swinging upon the gate, his cap gayly set off with feathers, and he looking wonderingly upon the bier. He sees, too, the sad face of Adèle, and, by some strange rush of memory, recalls, as he looks on her, the letter which she had given him long ago, and which till then had been forgotten. He runs to his mother: it is in his pocket, — it is in that of some summer jacket. At last it is found; and the poor woman herself, that very morning, with numberless apologies, delivers it at the door of the parsonage.

Phil is the first to meet this exceptional funeral company, and is the first to tell Adèle how Reuben lies stricken almost to death at the parsonage. She thanks him: she thanks him again for the tender care which he shows in all relating to the approaching burial. When an enemy even comes forward to help us bury the child we loved or the parent we mourn, our hearts warm toward him as they never warmed before; but when a friend assumes these offices of tenderness, and takes away the harshest edge of grief by assuming the

harshest duties of grief, our hearts shower upon him their tenderest sympathies. We never forget it.

Of course, the arrival of this strange freight in Ashfield gives rise to a world of gossip. We cannot follow it; we cannot rehearse it. The poor woman is buried, as Adèle had wished, beside her sister. No *De Profundis* except the murmur of the winds through the crimson and the scarlet leaves of later September.

The Tourtelots have been eager with their gossip. The dame has queried if there should not be some town demonstration against the burial of the Papist. But the little Deacon has been milder; and we give our last glimpse of him — altogether characteristic — in a suggestion which he makes in a friendly way to Squire Elderkin, who is the host of the French strangers.

"Square, have they ordered a moniment yit for Miss Maverick?"

"Not that I 'm aware of, Deacon."

"Waäl, my nevvy 's got a good slab of Varmont marble, which he ordered for his fust wife; but the old folks did n't like it, and it 's in his barn on the heater-piece. 'T ain't engraved, nor nothin'. If it should *suit* the Mavericks, I dare say they could git it tol'able low."

LXVI.

REUBEN is still floating between death and life. There is doubt whether the master of the long course or of the short course will win. However that may be, his consciousness has returned; and it has been with a great glow of gratitude that the poor Doctor has welcomed that look of recognition in his eye, — the eye of Rachel!

He is calm, — he knows all. That calmness which had flashed into his soul when last he saw the serene face of his fellow-voyager upon that mad sea is *his* still.

The poor father had been moved unwontedly by that unconsciousness which was blind to all his efforts at spiritual consolation; but he is not less moved when he sees reason stirring again, — a light of eager inquiry in those eyes fearfully sunken, but from their cavernous depths seeing farther and more keenly than ever.

"Adèle's mother, — was she lost?" He whispers it to the Doctor; and Miss Eliza, who is sewing yonder, is quickened into eager listening.

"Lost! my son, lost! Lost, I apprehend, in the other world as well as this. I fear the true light never dawned upon her."

A faint smile — as of one who sees things others do not see — broke over the face of Reuben. "'T is a broad light, father; it reaches beyond our blind reckoning."

There was a trustfulness in his manner that delighted the Doctor. "And you see it, my son? — Repentance, Justification by Faith, Adoption, Sanctification, Election?"

"Those words are a weariness to me, father; they suggest methods, dogmas, perplexities. Christian hope, pure and simple, I love better."

The Doctor is disturbed; he cannot rightly understand how one who seems inspired by so calm a trust — the son of his own loins too — should find the authoritative declarations of the divines a weariness. Is it not some subtle disguise of Satan, by which his poor boy is being cheated into repose?

Of course the letter of Adèle, which had been so long upon its way, Miss Eliza had handed to Reuben after such time as her caution suggested, and she had explained to him its long delay.

Reading is no easy matter for him; but he races through those delicately penned lines with quite a new strength. The spinster sees the color come and go upon his wan cheek, and with what a trembling eagerness he folds the letter at the end, and, making a painful effort, tries to thrust it under his pillow. The good

woman has to aid him in this. He thanks her, but says nothing more. His fingers are toying nervously at a bit of torn fringe upon the coverlet. It seems a relief to him to make the rent wider and wider. A little glimpse of the world has come back to him, which disturbs the repose with which but now he would have quitted it forever.

Adèle has been into the sick-chamber from time to time, — once led away weeping by the good Doctor, when the son had fallen upon his wild talk of school-days; once, too, since consciousness has come to him again, but before her letter had been read. He had met her with scarce more than a touch of those fevered fingers, and a hard, uncertain quiver of a smile, which had both shocked and disappointed the poor girl. She thought he would have spoken some friendly consoling word of her mother; but his heart, more than his strength, failed him. Her mournful, pitying eyes were a reproach to him; they had haunted him through the wakeful hours of two succeeding nights, and now, under the light of that laggard letter, they blaze with a new and an appealing tenderness. His fingers still puzzle wearily with that tangle of the fringe. The noon passes. The aunt advises a little broth. But no, his strength is feeding itself on other aliment. The Doctor comes in with a curiously awkward attempt at gentleness and noiselessness of tread, and, seeing his ex-

cited condition, repeats to him some texts which he believes must be consoling. Reuben utters no open dissent; but through and back of all he sees the tender eyes of Adèle, which, for the moment, outshine the promises, or at the least illuminate them with a new meaning.

"I must see Adèle," he says to the Doctor; and the message is carried, — she herself presently bringing answer, with a rich glow upon her cheek.

"Reuben has sent for me," — she murmurs it to herself with pride and joy.

She is in full black now; but never had she looked more radiantly beautiful than when she stepped to the side of the sick-bed, and took the hand of Reuben with an eager clasp — that was met, and met again. The Doctor is in his study, (the open door between,) and the spinster is fortunately just now busy at some of her household duties.

Reuben fumbles under his pillow nervously for that cherished bit of paper, (Adèle knows already its history,) and when he has found it and shown it (his thin fingers crumpling it nervously) he says, "Thank you for this, Adèle!"

She answers only by clasping his hand with a sudden mad pressure of content, while the blood mounted into either cheek with a rosy exuberance that magnified her beauty tenfold.

He saw it, — he felt it all; and through her beaming eyes, so full of tenderness and love, saw the world to which he had bidden adieu shining before him more beguilingly than ever. Yesterday it was a dim and weary world that he could leave without a pang; to-day it is a brilliant world, where hopes, promises, joys pile in splendid proportions.

He tells her this. "Yesterday I would have died with scarce a regret; to-day, Adèle, I would live."

"You will, you will, Reuben!" and she grappled more and more passionately those shrunken fingers. "'T is not hopeless!" (sobbing.)

"No, no, Adèle, darling, not hopeless. The cloud is lifted, — not hopeless!"

"Thank God, thank God!" said she, dropping upon her knees beside him, and with a smile of ecstasy he gathered that fair head to his bosom.

The Doctor, hearing her sobs, came softly in. The son's smile, as he met his father's inquiring look, was more than ever like the smile of Rachel. He has been telling the poor girl of her mother's death, thinks the old gentleman; yet the Doctor wonders that he could have kept so radiant a face with such a story.

Of these things, however, Reuben goes on presently to speak: of his first sight of the mother of Adèle, and of her devotional attitude as they floated down past the little chapel of Nôtre Dame to enter upon the fateful

voyage; he recounts their talks upon the tranquil moon-lit nights of ocean; he tells of the mother's eager listening to his description of her child.

"I did not tell her the half, Adèle; yet she loved me for what I told her."

And Adèle smiles through her tears.

At last he comes to those dismal scenes of the wreck, relating all with a strange vividness; living over again, as it were, that fearful episode, till his brain whirled, his self-possession was lost, and he broke out into a torrent of delirious raving.

He sleeps brokenly that night, and the next day is feebler than ever. The physician warns against any causes of excitement. He is calm only at intervals. The old school-days seem present to him again; he talks of his fight with Phil Elderkin as if it happened yesterday.

"Yet I like Phil," he says (to himself), "and Rose is like Amanda, the divine Amanda. No — not she. I've forgotten: it's the French girl. She's a —— Pah! who cares? She's as pure as heaven; she's an angel. Adèle! Adèle! Not good enough! I'm not good enough. Very well, very well, now I'll be bad enough! Clouds, wrangles, doubts! Is it my fault? *Meam Ecclesiam!* How they kneel! Puppets! mummers! No, not mummers; they see a Christ. What if they see it in a picture? You see Him in words.

Both in earnest. Belief — belief! That is best. Adèle, Adèle, I believe!"

The Doctor is a pained listener of this incoherent talk of his son. "I am afraid, — I am afraid," he murmurs to himself, "that he has no clear views of the great scheme of the Atonement."

The next day Reuben is himself once more, but feeble, to a degree that startles the household. It is a charming morning of later September; the window is wide open, and the sick one looks out over a stretch of orchard (he knew its every tree), and upon wooded hills beyond (he knew every coppice and thicket), and upon a background of sky over which a few dappled white clouds floated at rest.

"It is most beautiful!" said Reuben.

"All things that He has made are beautiful," said the Doctor; and thereupon he seeks to explore his way into the secrets of Reuben's religious experience, — employing, as he was wont to do, all the Westminster formulas by which his own belief stood fast.

"Father, father, the words are stumbling-blocks to me," says the son.

"I would to God, Reuben, that I could make my language always clear."

"No, father, no man can, in measuring the Divine mysteries. We must carry this draggled earth-dress with us always, — always in some sort fashionists, even

in our soberest opinions. The robes of light are worn only Beyond. Thought, at the best, is hampered by this clog of language, that tempts, obscures, misleads."

"And do you see any light, my son?"

"I hope and tremble. A great light is before me; it shines back upon outlines of doctrines and creeds where I have floundered for many a year."

"But some are clear, — some are clear, Reuben!"

"Before, all seems clear; but behind" —

"And yet, Reuben," (the Doctor cannot forbear the discussion,) "there is the cross, — Election, Adoption, Sanctification" —

"Stop, father; the cross, indeed, with a blaze of glory, I see; but the teachers of this or that special form of doctrine I see only catching radiations of the light. The men who teach, and argue, and declaim, and exorcise, are using human weapons; the great light only strikes here and there upon some sword-point which is nearest to the cross."

"He wanders," says the Doctor to Adèle, who has slipped in and stands beside the sick-bed.

"No wandering, father; on the brink where I stand, I cannot."

"And what do you see, Reuben, my boy?" (tenderly.)

Is it the presence of Adèle that gives a new fervor, a kind of crazy inspiration to his talk? "I see the light-

hearted clashing cymbals; and those who love art, kneeling under blazing temples and shrines; but the great light touches the gold no more effulgently than the steeple of your meeting-house, father, but no less. I see eyes of chanting girls streaming with joy in the light; and haggard men with ponderous foreheads working out contrivances to bridge the gap between the finite and the infinite. Father, they are no nearer to a passage than the radiant girls who chant and tell their beads. Angels in all shapes of beauty flit over and amid the throngs I see, — in shape of fleecy clouds that fan them, — in shape of brooks that murmur praise, — in shape of leafy shadows that tremble and flicker, — in shape of birds that make a concert of song." The birds even then were singing, the clouds floating in his eye, the leafy shadows trailing on the chamber floor, and, from the valley, the murmur of the brook came to his sensitive ear.

"He wanders, — he wanders!" said the poor Doctor.

Reuben turns to Adèle. "Adèle, kiss me!" A rosy tint ran over her face as she stooped and kissed him with a freedom a mother might have shown, — leaving one hand toying caressingly with his hair. "The cloud is passing, Adèle, — passing! God is Justice; Christ is Mercy. In Him I trust."

"Reuben, darling," says Adèle, "come back to us!"

"Darling, — darling!" he repeated with a strange, eager, satisfied smile, — so sweet a sound it was.

The chamber was filled with the delightful perfume of a violet bed beneath the window. Suddenly there came from the Doctor, whose old eyes caught sooner than any the change, a passionate outcry. "Great God! Thy will be done!"

With that one loud, clear utterance, his firmness gave way, — for the first time in sixty years broke utterly; and big tears streamed down his face as he gazed yearningly upon the dead body of his first-born.

LXVII.

IN the autumn of 1845, three years after the incidents related in our last chapter, Mr. Philip Elderkin, being at that time president of a railroad company, which was establishing an important connection of travel that was to pass within a few miles of the quiet town of Ashfield, was a passenger on the steamer *Caledonia* for Europe. He sailed, partly in the interest of the company, — to place certain bonds, — and partly in his own interest, as an intelligent man, eager to add to his knowledge of the world.

At Paris, where he passed some time, it chanced that he was one evening invited to the house of a resident American, where, he was gayly assured, he would meet with a very attractive American heiress, the only daughter of a merchant of large fortune.

Philip Elderkin — brave, straightforward fellow that he was — had never forgotten his early sentiment. He had cared for those French graves in Ashfield with an almost religious attention. In all the churchyard there was not such scrupulously shorn turf, or such orderly array of bloom. He counted — in a fever of doubt — upon a visit to Marseilles before his sail for home.

But at the *soirée* we have mentioned he was amazed and delighted to meet, in the person of the heiress, Adèle Maverick, — not changed essentially since the time he had known her. That life at Marseilles — even in the well-appointed home of her father — has none of that domesticity which she had learned to love; and this first winter in Paris for her does not supply the lack. That she has a great company of admirers it is easy to understand; but yet she gives a most cordial greeting to Phil Elderkin, — a greeting that by its manner makes the pretenders doubtful. Philip finds it possible to reconcile the demands of his business with a week's visit to Marseilles. To the general traveler it is not a charming region. The dust abounds; the winds are terrible; the sun is scalding. But Mr. Philip Elderkin found it delightful. And, indeed, the country-house of Mr. Maverick had attractions of its own; attractions so great that his week runs over into two, — into three. There are excursions to the Pont du Gard, to the Arène of Arles. And, before he leaves, he has an engagement there (which he has enforced by very peremptory proposals) for the next spring.

On his return to Ashfield, he reports a very successful trip. To his sister Rose (now Mrs. Catesby, with a blooming little infant, called Grace Catesby) he is specially communicative. And she thinks it was a

glorious trip, and longs for the time when he will make the next. He, furthermore, to the astonishment of Dame Tourtelot (whose husband sleeps now under the sod), has commenced the establishment of a fine home, upon a charming site, overlooking all Ashfield. The Squire, still stalwart, cannot resist giving a hint of what is expected to the old Doctor, who still wearily goes his rounds, and prays for the welfare of his flock.

He is delighted at the thought of meeting again with Adèle, though he thinks with a sigh of his lost boy. Yet he says in his old manner, "'T is the hand of Providence: she first bloomed into grace under the roof of our church; she comes back to adorn it with her faith and her works."

At a date three years later we take one more glimpse at that quiet village of Ashfield, where we began our story. The near railway has brought it into more intimate connection with the shore towns and the great cities. But there is no noisy clatter of the cars to break the quietude. On still days, indeed, the shriek of the steam-whistle or the roar of a distant train is heard bursting over the hills, and dying in strange echoes up and down the valley. The stage-driver's horn is heard no longer; no longer the coach whirls into the village and delivers its leathern pouch of letters. The Tew partners we once met are now part-

ners in the grave. Deacon Tourtelet (as we have already hinted) has gone to his long home; and the dame has planted over him the slab of "Varmont" marble, which she has bought at a bargain from his "nevvy."

The Boody tavern-keeper has long since disappeared; no teams wheel up with the old dash at the doors of the Eagle Tavern. The creaking sign-board even is gone from the overhanging sycamore.

Miss Almira is still among the living. She sings treble, however, no longer; she wears spectacles; she writes no more over mystical asterisks for the "Hartford Courant." Age has brought to her at least this much of wisdom.

The mill groans, as of old, in the valley. A new race of boys pelt the hanging nests of the orioles; a new race of school-girls hang swinging on the village gates at the noonings.

As for Miss Johns, she lives still, — scarce older to appearance than twenty years before, — prim, wiry, active, — proof against all ailments, it would seem. It is hard to conceive of her as yielding to the great conqueror. If the tongue and an inflexibility of temper were the weapons, she would whip Death from her chamber at the last. It seems like amiability almost to hear such a one as she talk of her approaching, inevitable dissolution, — so kindly in her to yield that point!